Rereading Modern Chinese History

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Rereading Modern Chinese History

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Series Editors' Foreword

The rise of China as an economic and political power is unquestionably one of the most striking phenomena of global significance as we enter the first decade of the twenty-first century. Ever since the end of the "Cultural Revolution" and the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, tremendous changes have transformed China from an isolated and relatively weak country into a rapidly developing and dynamic society. The scale and speed of such transformations have taken the world—even the Chinese themselves—by surprise; China today is drastically different from, and in a remarkably better condition than, China thirty years ago despite the many economic, social, and political difficulties and problems that yet remain to be dealt with. China scholars in Europe and North America are called upon to provide information and explanation of the rise of China, a country with history and tradition reaching back to antiquity and yet showing amazing strength and cultural virility in the world today. Interest in China is not limited to the traditional field of Sinology or China studies, nor is it confined to the academic world of universities, for more and more people outside of academia are curious about China, about its history and culture, as well as the changes taking place in the contemporary world. The Western news media brings images from China to every household; Sinologists or China scholars publish numerous articles and books to satisfy the general need for understanding: China is receiving a high-level of attention in the West today whether we turn to the scholarly community or look at popular imagination.

In understanding China, however, very little is available in the West that allows the average reader to have a glance at how China and its culture and history are understood by the Chinese themselves. This seems a rather strange omission, but in much of the twentieth century, the neglect of native Chinese scholarship was justified on the grounds of a perception of political control in China, where scholarship, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, was dominated by party ideology and strictly followed a prescribed party line. Such politically controlled scholarship was thought to be more propaganda than real scholarship, and consequently Western scholars rarely referred to contemporary Chinese scholarship in their works.

In the last thirty years, however, Chinese scholarship and public opinion, like everything else in China, have undergone such tremendous changes that the old stereotype of a politically controlled scholarship no longer holds. New and important archaeological findings in China have changed our knowledge of ancient texts and our understanding of Chinese history in significant ways, and detailed studies of such new materials are available in native Chinese

scholarship. Since the 1980s, many Chinese scholars have critically reflected on the nature of scholarship and questioned the old dogma of political and ideological orthodoxy, while many important books have been published that present a new outlook on Chinese history and culture. The time has come for Western scholars and other interested readers to engage academic perspectives originating in China, and making important academic works from China available in English is an important step in this engagement. Translation of influential academic works from China will greatly contribute to our better understanding of China from different perspectives and in different ways, beyond the dichotomies of the inside and the outside, a native Chinese view and a Western observer's vantage point.

Brill's Humanities in China Library is a newly established book series that has been commissioned by Brill in response to that need. The series aims to introduce important and representative works of native Chinese scholarship in English translation, in which each volume is carefully selected and expertly translated for the benefit of Western scholars as well as general readers who have an interest in China and its culture but may not read the Chinese language in the original. It is our hope that this series of representative books in translation will be useful to both specialists and general readers for understanding China from a different point of view, and that it will be an important step towards a fruitful dialogue and an exchange of ideas between Chinese and Western scholars.

Zhang Longxi
Axel Schneider
July 29, 2008

Preface: *Rereading Modern Chinese History*

Zhu Weizheng

For many years as a historian of China I was just a reader of 'modern history'.

The origin of this was in the awe generated by the wave of 'stressing the present not the past' that swept through China's academic circles in 1958. At that time I was still involved in the advanced study of history at university and was suddenly confronted with the open denunciation of 'stressing the past and not the present' by theoretical authorities. [They characterised this as] a manoeuvre by feudal bourgeois scholars resisting scholarship in the service of real politics and appealed to specialists in subjects such as literature, history and philosophy to 'stress the present not the past'. Some distinguished leftists even advocated switching Chinese history around so that it went from the present to the past and would thus be permeated with the spirit of continuous revolution. I take the view that it is illogical for the science of history to be equated with the reality of politics, but it is revealing and is a pointer to 'empty specialism'. Fortunately because of this it has been assigned to specialisation within ancient Chinese history so that it remained in the sphere of mediaeval history which was considered distant from the reality of politics.

Years passed and then in the twinkling of an eye, as intellectuals had their 'caps removed', university faculty members, following the studies of Professor Chen Shoushi on the history of agrarian relationships, were unexpectedly assigned by Professor Zhou Yutong as assistants on the university textbook that he was editing, *Selected Documents in Chinese History*. All had a wide knowledge of both ancient and modern history and I had no alternative but to cross the threshold into 'modern history'.

However from the outset it was obvious that the 1840 dividing line between ancient and modern history was illogical. Even if the fact that in spite of defeat in the Opium War there was no break in the continuity of rule during the 13 years of the Qing dynasty reign of Daoguang is not mentioned, it can be seen that after the Daoguang emperor was forced to ratify the Sino-British Treaty of Nanjing, the Manchu Qing maintained their 'ancestral rule' across the country, even though the capital was lost twice by the Xianfeng emperor and his successor the Empress Dowager, Cixi: neither was there any fundamental transformation in Chinese society. For modern historians trying to explain the primary causes of the so called 'transformation', it seemed that there might be joint causes—foreign invasion and internal rebellion—but this was a matter of endless dispute. In particular one explanation of the 'opening eyes to

the world' [debate] raised a great clamour, the question of whether the first individual to 'open his eyes' to the world in modern times was Lin Zexu or Wei Yuan—in either case a false proposition. The Daoguang emperor sent Lin Zexu to proscribe opium to stem the 'outflow of silver' and it is not necessary to reiterate the revelation in Chinese and foreign histories of the economy that China was silver-poor; that silver had been the basis of its currency system for 400 years; and that the origin of hard currency depended on the 'inflow of silver' that resulted from overseas trade. Similarly it is not necessary to repeat the history of the foreign relations of the Qing dynasty and its emphasis on the Board of Astronomy which protected the 'heavenly mandate' of the emperors through the calendar and astrological divination, a matter that was presided over for a long period of time by Western missionaries. In 1835 (Daoguang 15) the final Western Chief Astronomer retired and returned to Europe and only then did the Daoguang emperor decide to appoint a Chinese official well-versed in Western calendrical methods. Up to this point did not officials of the Qing court have both eyes firmly fixed on the world beyond China's borders to their discredit? By the eve of the Opium War, on the question of who had 'opened their eyes to the world', there were those who spoke openly but with little knowledge about history, such as the late Qing officials Woren [a Mongol] and Xu Tong.

Because my reading during the 1970s was rather casual I was not even permitted to cooperate in annotating the works of the 'legalist' Zhang Taiyan. Then I discovering that the celebrated works on modern history by Fan Wenlan and Hu Sheng that I had previously believed in implicitly contained logical and historical errors. Later I returned to teaching and lectured on the history of the classics and historiography; I passively studied the overall history of modern ideas and culture and became determined to uncover the truth. Therefore for the first time in writing *Coming out of the Middle Ages* I suggested that, from the late Ming to the late Qing, it could be said that Chinese history was a continuous process of modernisation in space-time. I did not expect that this small book would lead to such controversy, with some eminent modern historians arguing that its real title should be 'Blasting out of the Middle Ages'. In my humble opinion the successive great unifications of the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties over almost 700 years prove conclusively that the Chinese nation, and what Fei Xiaotong called 'unity in diversity', are without parallel anywhere in the world. Up to the Daoguang reign of the Qing dynasty, the Manchu court had, as Marx pointed out, become the 'representatives of a decayed and outworn world'. However after the Opium War and subsequent conflicts with foreign powers, this decadent and degenerate regime still managed to remain in power for almost 70 years in spite of repeated defeats. The main support for

this colossus with feet of clay was the population of the rural villages under the dragon banner: they were the majority of the population and unless oppressive government drove them to rebellion they supported the ordained Son of Heaven on high which may seem strange. Otherwise they were two poles of the same system.

It was in the countryside of the late Qing period that the Taiping rebellion, the Nian uprising and the Boxer movement arose. Similar villages provided recruits for the Hunan Army, the Huai Army, [Zuo Zongtang's] Chu Army and the New Armies that emerged at the end of the Qing dynasty. As long as the quality of life in the villages remained as unchanged as it had for thousands of years, Chinese society would experience both great rebellions and great control. Perhaps the existence of these opposites made it difficult to bring the cycle to an end. Does this not confirm that the spirit of Ah Q as depicted by Lu Xun's has not vanished? I do not know but now that this spirit has exceeded the normal course of events, it is possible that this implies that the empire of great unity faces a contemporary crisis.

Unworthy to take my place among practitioners of Chinese economic history I was initially a teaching artisan and then edited and wrote books. Over the course of fifty years I have offered many history courses: these have included the history of the Confucian classics; historiography; the history of ideas; cultural history and the history of scholarship. My reflections on history over those years resulted in successive publication including *Coming out of the Middle Ages, The Tradition of the Undetermined Tone, Seeking True Culture: the History of Science on the Late Ming, Records of Old Dreams of Reform, Coming out of the Middle Ages, Volume 2*, and the collection *Spring and Autumn in the Kettle*. In addition there is of course a collection of almost one hundred edited and annotated works on historiography and the Confucian classics. At my advanced age I have had the opportunity for the occasional rereading of material on modern history and taking notes. In collecting together these short pieces from the past five years I must stress that the selection, titles and categories are slightly different from those in my previously published works and I hope that this will not perturb my readers.

July 2010, Drafted in the period of Lesser Heat and revised during the Greater Heat according to the traditional agricultural calendar.

Translator's Introduction

Zhu Weizheng's reflections on his re-reading of the history of modern China were composed in quiet moments, often at night. Many of them were in response to a request that he contribute articles to a newspaper website. In the manner of the *biji*, ('jottings' or 'notebooks') of earlier generations, they include anecdotes, quotations from classical literary and historical texts and ruminations on diverse historical and contemporary topics. They provide a fascinating insight into the thinking of a leading Chinese historian who practiced his craft on the Chinese mainland in the difficult political climate of the twentieth century. Many of his brief essays offer a restrained commentary on contemporary Chinese politics in parallel with the main focus on the Qing dynasty. Zhu's concept of modern history is rather broader than that usually accepted in the People's Republic of China: 'modern history' officially begins with the Opium War of 1839–1842 and ends with the May Fourth Movement of 1919, after which the Chinese Communist Party appears on the scene and history becomes 'contemporary'. Zhu's ruminations on history often take us much further back that this, to the early reigns of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) with many excursions into even earlier literary and historical traditions.

Zhu refers constantly to the sources for his historical thoughts, some of them familiar to students of Chinese history but many of them obscure or forgotten and the citations are plentiful. It is not a text with a clear central theme. It is, as his title indicates, a collection of essays—some more formal than others—based on re-reading material with which he is deeply familiar and in which he considers and reconsiders his thoughts and his concerns about history, historiography and China.

It is a fascinating study but a challenge to the reader and the translator. He assumes that his Chinese readers will have great familiarity with not only the history but the literary language of the period from the seventeenth to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the lifespan of the Qing dynasty which ruled China from 1644 to 1911—and indeed much earlier, as there are many references to the Han dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD) and to even earlier writings in the Confucian tradition. Only a minority of his readers in the People's Republic will have this facility and, unsurprisingly this requires rather more explanation for an English-speaking readership, and even for a translator.

I have attempted to stay as close to the content of Zhu Weizheng's text as possible, correcting only obvious minor typographical errors. His factual statements and interpretations have been left unchanged although I have occasionally added some editorial notes in square brackets where I felt that the

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English-speaking reader needed a little more information. It has not been possible to reflect the style of the original exactly. Zhu's prose style varies from the highly formal with the use of many *chengyu* set phrases, to the colloquial and casual. The vocabulary that he uses often reflects that period of the historical material on which he is commenting and his choice of words is at times unusual or even obscure. In this collection there is often considerable overlap and some essays have been edited to avoid unnecessary repetition.

It would not have been possible to complete this translation without the assistance of many reference works on Chinese history and language, in addition to the standard dictionaries and encyclopaedias. I acknowledge my indebtedness to these and have included the most important in the brief bibliography below.

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PART 1

Historical Uncertainties

ESSAY 1

‘Backward Therefore Beaten’?

As late as 20 years before the outbreak of the Opium War between Qing dynasty China and Britain, that is in 1820 when the Jiaqing emperor died and the Daoguang emperor ascended the throne, China’s GDP was still 32.9% of the overall world GDP. The total production of the leading twelve countries of Western Europe (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden and Norway) was way aheadof America (1.8%) and Japan (3%), by 12 percentage points.

The World Economy: a Millennium Perspective, written by the distinguished economic historian, Angus Maddison, and published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris in 2004, which put forward this set of data, often shocks readers of Chinese history (translated into Chinese by Wu Xiaoying and others as *Shijie jingji qiannianshi* Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004, p. 261, table B20).

For over half a century Chinese history textbooks at all levels have repeatedly told their readers that ‘backwardness was bound to be beaten’. What is meant by ‘beaten’ of course is the armed aggression that China suffered at the hands of the Western powers (with the later addition of Japan), the starting point being the war that Great Britain launched against China in 1840.

Chinese and foreign scholars have many, and often mutually contradictory, explanations for the origin of this war. In the middle ages China had an enduring tradition of revering the sage [Confucius] and worshipping the Confucian classics. The emperors of the Manchu Qing dynasty liked to consider themselves as contemporary sages. Yongzheng and Qianlong were especially on their guard against anyone who criticised evils or abuses during their reigns, denouncing them without exception for using unruly language ‘like the barking of dogs’. What has been viewed as in general a hundred years of social stability and economic prosperity was in fact a mask for murkiness, secrecy and political corruption on a daily basis. Under the impetus of these two contrasting forces, Chinese society became increasingly and acutely polarised. During the lifetime of the Qianlong emperor the White Lotus rebellion had spread into what are now the provinces of Sichuan, Hunan and Hubei. Shortly after his death in 1799, internal dissension among powerful Manchu officials in the court culminated in the arrest and forced suicide of Heshen, a corrupt official who had had a hold over the Qianlong emperor. These events cast light on the two sides of the true face of the ‘age of abundance’.

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Therefore to say that the Opium War happened because China was 'backward therefore beaten' does not accord with the reality of Chinese history. In the first instance the economy of China at that time was not backward; its GDP still ranked first in the world as can easily be demonstrated. Secondly, China at that time was not closed to foreigners. As economic historians, including Quan Hansheng, have long pointed out, China as a country was deficient in silver, but from the first year of the Zhengtong reign of the Ming dynasty emperor, Yingzong, (1436) to the 24th year of the Republic (1935), a period of 500 years, China operated a currency system based on silver. Silver flowed into China continuously from Japan and the Americas, the channel for this being foreign trade. A counter example is the Kangxi emperor's prohibition on maritime trade that was imposed to deal with the Cheng Chenggong [Koxinga] regime on Taiwan: this resulted immediately in a nationwide shortage of silver and rapid inflation and once the rebel regime in Taiwan had been subjugated, the prohibition was abolished and the problem of expensive silver and cheap copper [as inflation manifested itself] vanished at once. Thirdly even if we do not take into account the Han and the Tang dynasties, we should consider the Ming dynasty, sandwiched between the two great global empires of the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu Qing, with its territories constrained within the Great Wall. During the early years of the Ming dynasty, Zheng He's fleet 'sailed to the Western Oceans' (*xia xiyang*) and in the later Ming, Xu Guangqi (1562–1633) and other gentry of the south welcomed the Jesuit missionaries Matteo Ricci, Julio Aleni (1582–1649) and others into the country, demonstrating that there were men of vision in China at the time who were becoming conscious of the world outside and thus disproving the premise, which runs counter to historical reality, that in China at the time of the Opium War, people had 'closed their eyes to the world'. Fourthly, if we just examine the logic of the supposition that the Opium War took place because China was 'backward and therefore beaten', it does not make sense. Britain was not the first pirate nation to have coveted China. Portugal, Spain and the Dutch had all made previous incursions into China from the oceans. Was that because China was 'poor and blank' [a phrase used by Mao Zedong to describe the Chinese people]? Not so. It was in fact because China was wealthier than Europe. Columbus believed that the world was round and, to break through the restrictions imposed by the Portuguese, he thought that he should sail westwards to reach China, this Eldorado, not realising that he would accidentally discover a new continent. This is the obvious example. For the sake of comparison, if a robber was after plunder and found that one family was so poor that they had nothing but the bare walls of their house and another family was dripping with wealth, would they risk the stormy oceans to ransack the house of the poor family rather than the rich?

The calculations and analysis of data on Chinese economic history before and after the Opium War in Maddison's *The World Economy: a Millennium Perspective*, previously cited, cannot be improved on. For example the British East India Company was unable to force open the China market so it decided to force peasants in Bengal to plant and grow the opium poppy, and smuggled the opium that was harvested into China to turn round the adverse balance of trade, thus creating a net outflow of Chinese silver and also jeopardising commodity trade between China and Britain and the rest of Western Europe. This is clearly demonstrated in Marx's *History of the Opium Trade* and other documents but Maddison does not pay any attention to them.

However, from the combined data and the analysis of Maddison's *The World Economy: a Millennium Perspective*, a basic historical truth emerges: China in the middle of the Ming dynasty was one of the wealthiest nations in the world. It was its integration into the world economy and international competition that caused it to descend rapidly into the position of the sick man of East Asia and become the piece of fish in the claws of Europe and America (and Japan that was catching them up). The historical reason for this was the increasing decline in economic prosperity, and the rise of political corruption and the darker side of society.

20 November 2007, at night.

ESSAY 2

Questioning the Theory of the 'Two Cannons'

For the past half century, all Chinese history textbooks have described the two historical starting points—of modern and contemporary history—in the same way.

1. In 1840, the British launched the Opium War, relying on naval cannons to batter down the doors of closed China, compelling the Qing dynasty to sign the humiliating Treaty of Nanjing. From this point onwards, China was reduced to the status of a semi-colony of the Western powers.
2. In 1917, 'the roar of cannon fire from the Russian October Revolution brought us Marxism-Leninism'. From this point onwards, China awoke and followed the Russian road.

That is to say that the first cannon shots knocked China from 'ancient' into 'modern' and forced it into the orbit of the Western capitalist world system. The second cannon shots led China from 'modern' into 'contemporary', following Soviet Russia into the new socialist world constructed by Lenin and Stalin.

Cutting the Qing period in half to fix the beginning of China's modern history and the practice of taking the May 4th Movement of 1919 as the direct result of the Russian October Revolution and the starting point of China's contemporary history both have their origins in the classic directives of Mao Zedong.

Over a period of twenty years I have had serious doubts about this theory of 'two cannons'. According to the 'two cannons' theory, if British gunboats had not attacked China's 10,000 *li* maritime frontier without experiencing any serious resistance, the Manchu Qing emperor Daoguang would not have been willing to agree to the Treaty of Nanjing. If it had not been for the 'roar of the cannons of Russia's October Revolution', Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao and others could not have founded the Communist Party under the direction of special envoys of Soviet Russia. Based on this logic, China entered the 'modern' by being blasted in by British cannons and its entry into the 'contemporary' was of course only possible as a distant echo of the great guns of the cruiser *Aurora* blasting out over Soviet Russia.

This logic is all very well but as a result when my book *Exiting the Middle Ages* appeared in the winter of 1987, the late Chen Xulu criticised the title saying that it should be entitled *Blasting out of the Middle Ages*.

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Logic should correspond to history. When China began to bid farewell to the middle ages, was it exiting of its own accord or was it blasted out by external aggressors? It is a difference of one word but it touches on the nature of China and the Chinese people. During the 1840 Opium War between the Qing and Britain, China had a maritime frontier of 10,000 *li*. Were a few dozen British sailing ships which were not that strong and equipped with cannons that were not that powerful, a force that was so completely irresistible? Does this really prove that China did not have the capacity to propel itself out of the middle ages? It has long since been demonstrated that China's defeat in that war was not a military defeat or a technological defeat, so what was the nature of that defeat? It was a defeat due to the corruption of the Manchu Qing autocratic system, especially the remote control approach of the Daoguang emperor who sat in the Purple Forbidden City in a state of confusion, blindly issuing orders. To identify the main culprit for the later crushing defeats in the Sino-French War [1884–5] and Sino-Japanese War [1894–5] and the propping up of the Boxer militia that led to the storming of Beijing by the foreign allied armies, it is necessary to examine the role of the Empress Dowager, Cixi, although historical arguments must also take into account the corruption of the entire system.

As to whether the 'roar of the cannons of the Russian October Revolution' blasted China into the modern age, that is another question. From a historical point of view, and taking into account the history of over 30 years of internal and external conflict from 1917 to 1949, this 'blasting' theory is not credible.

The border regions of China at the end of the Qing dynasty were subject to invasions and occupations by Tsarist Russia and Japan and were consequently much reduced in comparison with the great unified empire of the Kangxi period. Subsequently, the Chinese nation was formed from 56 different nationalities. Although the Han people were, and are, by far the greatest number, as Zhou Enlai put it the non-Han peoples of the border regions are distributed throughout an area that occupies some 60% of the land area of present day China, but are often excluded entirely from our modern or contemporary history, which is hardly rational.

As the largest multi-ethnic amalgamation in the world today, the Chinese people have long since taken their own road. In terms of the number of nationalities or ethnic minorities, China may be inferior to India or Soviet Russia, but the cohesion of the entire Chinese nation is relevant to the fact that 'modern' China, unlike India, did not decline into the condition of a British colony. The reason why contemporary China did not expand and suddenly disintegrate like the Soviet Union is of course a major outstanding question for research on world history.

It is obvious that questioning the theory of the ‘two cannons’ leads to an enquiry into whether modern and contemporary China were in fact ‘modernised’ and this is the starting point for further progress in historical research.

14 November 2007, at night.

ESSAY 3

Three Questions on 'Opening Their Eyes and Seeing the World'

1 Who First Gazed on the Other Side of the World?

In the spring of 1839, Lin Zexu arrived in Guangzhou to take up his post as Imperial Commissioner and one of the first measures that he adopted was not to search for and confiscate opium but to find someone to translate the newspaper *Macau News* so that he could understand the situation of the foreigners in China.[1] This astonished the foreigners who immediately recognised that Lin Zexu had nothing in common with the typical Qing bureaucrats who were powerful but ignorant. In addition, using the *Chinese Repository*, Lin Zexu collected material on the views of the foreigners and sent it to the Daoguang emperor in the form of an official petition: he did not receive any direct response. He also found someone to translate an introductory book on world geography that had been written by an Englishman called Murray, a book which in Chinese became the *Sizhou zhi* (*Gazeteer* [*or History*] *of the Four Continents*).[2] Later after Lin had been stripped of his office and banished, Wei Yuan, Xu Jiyu and others drew on his work for their own books, *Hai guo tu zhi* (*Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*) and *Ying huan zhi lűe* (*A Short Account of the Maritime Circuit*).

More than forty years after the death of Lin Zexu, Kang Youwei the great advocate of constitutional reform and modernisation, recalling these past events, said: 'Lin Wenzhong [Wenzhong was the honorific name bestowed on Lin Zexu after his death] was the first to translate the foreign press and also the first to pay serious attention to the condition of foreign countries'. This judgment does not entirely accord with historical reality but the first part, 'the first to translate the foreign press', is not too wide of the mark.

1 There were three major English-language newspapers run by Europeans in south China at that time: the *Canton Register* was published for six months in Guangzhou and six months in Macau; the *Canton Press*, which in Chinese is called the *Macau News* [*Aomen xinwen zhi*], was its main rival and the monthly Chinese Repository [*Aomen yuebao* or *Zhonguo zongbao*, which is the best known. [Ed]

2 Hugh Murray *Cyclopaedia of World Geography* (1836). [Ed]

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What was wide of the mark was the evaluation of an authoritative textbook of modern Chinese history that was first published in 1953 and argues that 'Lin Zexu was the first person in the Qing dynasty to open his eyes to the world'. I can still remember the first time that I read this view. I had just entered my second year of university and, as it happened, this was the time when the idea of 'a hundred schools contending' was being promoted. I heard this theory [about Lin] being introduced by Hu Shengwu and Jin Chongji and thought at the time that this was an original idea. How was I to know that after the passage of a quarter of a century this theory would suddenly become extremely popular again? Because it appears to be the last word in explaining the starting point of China's modern history, from an excess of curiosity I re-examined the history of the extent of knowledge about the outside world among Chinese during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Unfortunately I discovered that this theory must be judged to be anti-historical.

China's knowledge of the outside world can be traced right back to classical times, but just concentrating on the period of 1600 years between Zhang Qian's travels through the Western Regions [Central Asia] during the Western Han dynasty and Zheng He's voyages into the southern oceans at the beginning of the Ming dynasty, it is clear that relations between the successive dynasties of China were never completely severed during the middle ages. How could this be just groping around with eyes shut? It is often claimed that China is a vast territory with abundant resources, but lacking in adequate deposits of silver, but from 1436 (the first year of the Zhengtong reign of the Ming dynasty emperor Yingzong), taxes were calculated in silver and this evolved rapidly into a bimetallic currency system with silver as the standard. This system lasted right through to 1935 (the 24th year of the Chinese Republic) when paper currency replaced the silver dollar. Between these two dates, silver reserves were replenished by silver dollars and ingots from the Americas and Japan that were obtained through foreign trade, as was confirmed long ago by the researches of historians of Chinese and foreign currencies. When the Daoguang emperor, sixth of the great Manchu rulers, despatched Lin Zexu to Guangdong to impose a prohibition on the smuggling of opium, the real reason was to curb the outflow of silver and thus defuse the military and political crisis that had arisen. (Lin Zexu endorsed Huang Juezi's memorial on the complete prohibition of opium and his argument that without banning the narcotic, 'the Central Plains [China] would not be able to resist the enemy or even pay the salaries of their own troops). This also proves that the emperor himself was aware of the interrelationship between the world beyond China's borders and the security of the empire.

In fact, given the level of knowledge of the outside world in the period between the reign of the Shunzhi emperor and the 6th emperor, Daoguang, it is not possible to say that the Qing court had not 'opened its eyes to the world' before Lin Zexu reported on the *Chinese Repository* to the emperor. Otherwise why would the Shunzhi emperor have honoured the German Jesuit, Adam Schall von Bell, as *mafa* (which in the Manchu language means 'grandfather')? Why would the Kangxi emperor have dispatched Joachim Bouvet, a member of the French Foreign Missionary Society, back to France asking Louis IV to send more missionaries? Why would the Yongzheng emperor, while ruthlessly attacking clansmen of the imperial house who were Christians, have allowed at the same time the wearing of the clothes and wigs of European nobles? Why would the *Siku quanshu* (*Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*), an encyclopaedia, compiled on the orders of the Qianlong emperor, have contained summaries and criticisms of translations of Western books produced in the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties? Why would the Jiaqing emperor, following a long tradition, have appointed Western imperial astronomers to assist in the establishment of the calendar to provide astrological forecasts for the court? Why would the Daoguang emperor have followed with such interest the gains and losses in the outflow of silver that resulted from foreign trade? All of this has been difficult to explain historically.

I used to believe that 'beaten because backward' was a historical truth and also believed that from the Opium War to the War of Resistance against Japan, China had declined into a state of semi-colonial subjugation, almost to the point where the survival of the state was in danger. The reason for this was Mao Zedong's view that China's industry and technology were not as strong as those of Europe, America or Japan. Thirty-three years ago when they were being forced to 'criticise Confucianism and promote Legalism' in the service of the cause of the workers, peasants and soldiers [during the Cultural Revolution], theorists who had been analysing modern historical documents to ascertain dates were criticised for making history their own private property. The study of history had to revolve around the axis of the Opium War, after which everything was modern history. Later it became possible to get back on the rostrum to lecture and then to transform the inevitable doubts about the re-reading of modern history from oral to written. The origin of these doubts was Mao Zedong's 'beaten because backward' theory, so criticism was inevitable as they touched on what were regarded as final conclusions in textbooks. Perhaps defending oneself is not entirely appropriate, but in *The Daoguang emperor and his Prime Minister*, which I wrote sixteen years ago, I pointed out, among other things, that the Daoguang emperor was on the throne for thirty-five years

(1821–1850) which corresponds to the time span of a generation in the Chinese tradition.

For those who love fancy theories, this epoch was one of a favourable domestic and international environment. Europe after the battle of Waterloo was not able to act as an international policeman or meddle abroad because of the Holy Alliance [between Russia, Prussia and Austria]. The main interests of the European powers were in Europe and the Middle and Near East so they confined their activities to the western hemisphere. Even Britain's interest in Asia was primarily in India and Afghanistan. The strategic centre of gravity of imperialism, the combination of nationalism and mercantilism, had not yet reached the Far East. Domestically, Daoguang came to power more smoothly than had his father. At court he did not have to contend with powerful and domineering officials and in the country at large the White Lotus Society was no longer rebelling, although there were sporadic uprisings in the interior and ethnic disturbances on the borders. Generally speaking society could be characterised as being in a steady state. [see Zhu Weizheng *Tradition of Undetermined Tone*, Liaoning Educational Publishing, 1995, p. 174.]

At that time the core issue on which I was focusing was domestic and foreign influences on the court of Daoguang and its positive impact on China, and the question of why the Manchu Qing Empire could not carry out a reform of its own system from the top down as Gong Zizhen [1792–1841] had hoped. In a note to readers in my *Records of Old Dreams of Restoration: the self-reform movement in China during the hundred years before 1898* (Sanlian Publishing, 2000, pp. 21–72), I demonstrated that the prospect of the Manchu Qing rulers ever carrying out a systemic reform was an illusion. However, strangely enough, textbooks of modern Chinese history still look at the historical events on the eve of the Sino-British Opium War and assert that the reason for the defeat in the war was that the Qing rulers had no knowledge of the world beyond their borders and that it was Lin Zexu, going to Guangdong and collecting foreign books and newspapers, that made the Chinese 'open their eyes and look at the world'.

14 February 2008, at night.

2 Can It Be That the Chinese Could Only Open Their Eyes When They Saw Silver?

Some works of modern history commend the idea of 'the first person in the Qing dynasty to open his eyes and see the world', always suggesting either Lin

Zexu or Wei Yuan; others simply say that it was Wei Yuan. However that judgement relies on information provided by Wei Yuan (1794–1857) himself. In May or June 1841 (Daoguang 21) Lin Zexu was ordered by the emperor to go into exile in Yili [Ili in Xinjiang as punishment for his failures against the British in the Opium War]. On his way to this border and the garrison town of Yili, he met his old friend Wei Yuan in Zhenjiang [a city in Jiangsu close to both Nanjing and the intersection of the Yangzi River and the Grand Canal]. According to Wei Yuan's note to his own poem, 'On meeting Lin Shaomu [Zexu] at the Viceroy's yamen by the estuary', Lin Zexu handed him source materials for a *Gazetteer of the Four Continents* (*Sizhou zhi*) that he had been collecting in Guangdong for over two years. This was published under Wei Yuan's name as *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms* (*Haiguo tuzhi*), a book of 50 *juan* [volumes] which appeared early in 1843. Although Wei Yuan acknowledged in his preface that this was based on *Gazetteer of the Four Continents*, he made a point of saying that it also used a range of Chinese and foreign historical materials and 'new works from barbarian countries in barbarian languages' and that it was 'different from books on foreign countries by other authors (including of course *Gazetteer of the Four Continents*, *Macau Monthly* and other materials collected by Lin). He argued that, 'previous books were by Chinese scholars discussing the West whereas this is based on discussions of the West by Westerners.'

It was only four months since the Daoguang Emperor had ratified the Treaty of Nanjing (signed 29 August 1842) between the Qing Government and the United Kingdom that humiliated China and surrendered its sovereignty. Members of the Manchu Qing court at all levels and the general public were confused by the 'barbarians'. Some senior officials did not even know what 'English' was. Suddenly the *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms* appeared and the author was claiming that he was 'discussing the West from a Western point of view' and considering three policies for dealing with foreigners, directed at the English. 'Attacking the barbarians', 'paying off the barbarians' and 'controlling the barbarians' were all appropriate responses which made people pay attention to the problem. Some people also began to explore the relationship between these ideas and the world view of the unfortunate Lin Zexu.

Therefore when *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms* was published, the 'author', Wei Yuan, continued to copy out translations and in Daoguang 24 and 27 published two supplementary volumes, increasing the total length from 60 to 100 *juan*. This gained him fame and, for a century and a half, to historians on the mainland he became 'the first person to open his eyes and see the world', which is quite extraordinary.

In the early 1960s, I assisted Zhou Yutong in editing and annotating *Selected Documents in Chinese History* (*Zhongguo lishi wenxuan*) and we selected two sections of *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*. From the book I discovered that Wei Yuan had clearly quoted from Lin Zexu's writings without attribution, not just from *Gazetteer of the Four Continents*, but also from drafts of memorials that he had presented and the complete texts of his edited translations of *Foreign Views on Matters Chinese* (*Huashi yiyan*) and *Macau Monthly* (*Aomen yuebao*). After the Cultural Revolution, I revised this collection of source materials and carried out further research on the writings of Lin and Wei. More and more I came to believe that Wei Yuan had been dishonest. One cause for suspicion was that Lin Zexu had never suggested that he had seen Wei Yuan's 'jointly authored edition of *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*'. Moreover from this time until his exile and death, ten years in all, Lin, never refers to Wei Yuan or his books in the extant documents, which is curious.

This led me to re-examine the process by which the 50 *juan* of the first edition of the *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms* were compiled and I was shocked to discover that in 'the month when the Oceanic Barbarians invaded Nanjing' (*haiyi jiukuan Jingning zhi yue*), that is before 13 September 1842 (9th of the 8th month of Daoguang 22 in the Chinese calendar), Wei Yuan was busy compiling the *Shengwu ji* (*Record of the Sacred Military*), which extolled the subjugation of China by the forces of the Manchus [and the establishment of the Qing dynasty]. It was only after the Daoguang Emperor had transmitted his edict to Nanjing, ratifying the clauses of the treacherous Treaty of Nanjing that Wei began work on what he termed his jointly authored edition of Lin Zexu's *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*. He worked amazingly quickly, bringing out the volumes as he wrote, and by 3 January 1843 (3/12) 50 *juan* had been published in Yangzhou; in a total of three and a half months he was therefore writing and printing on average one *juan* every two days.

I pointed out that in Wei Yuan's previous publication, *Shu zhao xiao shuijing zhu hou*, he had denounced the edition of *Shui jing zhu* compiled by Dai Zhen for the Qing Bureau of the Encyclopaedia on the grounds that is had been plagiarised from Zhao Yiqing's edition, and criticisied Gong Zizhen's maternal grandfather, Duan Yucai, without having regard for his friend Gong's sensibilities. The circumstantial evidence was that when Zhao Yiqing had revised 160 *juan* of *Jifu shuili zhi* (Hebei), on the orders of the Viceroy of Zhili, Fang Guancheng, Dai Zhen had spent six months revising it into 80 *juan*, 'Knowing that this was a draft manuscript, and was not the creation of the hand of Dai alone, since Dai based his on Zhao's original version, how was it possible that

not one character in the *fanli* [the guide to the use of the book] was in the original?'. But abridging is not plagiarising. Therefore on the basis of this Wei Yuan did not have the right to complain about Dai Zhen but it was difficult to accept his guidance.

However he did not seem to expect that such an accusation would also be levelled against him. Since he had acknowledged that *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms* was jointly authored with Lin Zexu, this relationship could possibly have seriously damaged his reputation [after Lin's dismissal and exile] and therefore he did his utmost to cast aside any connections between that work and Lin Zexu. Moreover his experience in the period of the Opium Wars proves that in reality he had very little knowledge of the history of the opium trade or of the clashes between the Qing and the British and neither had he systematically investigated world history or geography. Strangely, less than four months after the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing, he suddenly presented himself as a specialist on both the history and the current condition of 'foreign affairs'. If this is related to his own explanation of how he acquired all the source materials that Lin Zexu had collected in Guangdong, then the speedily completed first edition of his *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms* can only be regarded as a 'retelling' and a 'retelling' that hides its main author, which is surely plagiarism.

After many years of hesitation, my accumulated suspicions have been written down in an article, 'Wei Yuan: awaking from a dream of dust?' [*Wei Yuan: chenmeng xing fou*?] It is not my intention to debate whether 'the first person in the Qing dynasty to open his eyes and see the world' was Lin Zexu or Wei Yuan because that is a false proposition. Scholars who have some understanding of the history of relations between China and the rest of the world will not look down on this. What I find strange is that this false proposition has been discussed seriously in modern history circles: in mainstream journals which claim to be authoritative or core publications, there is an unexpected reticence about this false theory or even endorsement.

An article that I contributed to the book, *Yindiao weiding de chuantong* (*Tradition of an Undetermined Tone*, Liaoning Educational Press, 1995, pp. 192–210), angered some Wei Yuan specialists who felt that they had been reprimanded by my theory. However, I maintain that in rereading modern history, this is a historical issue that must be investigated seriously. Engels said, 'moral indignation cannot take the place of science'. To this day I remain in hope of a refutation from a 'serious historian'.

16 February 2008, at night.

3 Can It Be Said That the Ancestors Closed Their Eyes and Blocked Their Ears?

It is said that 'monks from abroad can recite the classics'. In fact that title, 'monk' was introduced from ancient India. From the Former and Later Han dynasties onwards, a team of monks from the western regions travelled to China to teach people how to recite the Buddhist classics, at first in the original Sanskrit, which no one could understand. Then translations began to appear and of course these had to use Chinese characters to translate the specialist terminology of the Buddhist classics. Over the course of time these specialised terms blended into ancient Chinese so well that people forgot that they were originally foreign imports. Quite the reverse, in fact, as some of these words have been in use for so long that Chinese speakers use them routinely and the more ignorant and fearless insist that they have only appeared in 'modern times'. One example is the word for world (*shijie*) in this chapter heading.

'Climb a mountain to leave the world, ascend mountain trails to examine the void' is a well-known phrase of the Tang dynasty poet Cen Can [715–770], written when he climbed to the Monastery of Compassion and Mercy and its pagoda at Chang'an just before the An Lushan rebellion [755–6]. It is hardly necessary to point out that he must previously have seen the word for 'world' (*shijie*) in Chinese translations of the Buddhist classics and current dictionaries indicate that it first appeared in the Surangama Sutra (*Leng yan jing*).[3] Leaving aside disputes among scholars of Buddhist history about the authorship of the sutra, it can be assumed that the monk who translated this classic lived in the 8th century AD at around the time of the restoration of the monarchy in the reign of the Tang dynasty emperor Zhongzong. As this is one thousand three hundred years ago it is certainly ancient.

The description of Lin Zexu as 'the first person in the Qing dynasty to open his eyes and see the world' has been ascribed (above) to Fan Wenlan in the first volume of his *History of Modern China* (*Zhongguo jindai shi*). All my life I have respected Fan, who is known as the 'venerable' Fan, as a historian of the previous generation. Another of his books, the unfinished *Short General History of China* (*Zhongguo tongshi jianbian*), was the authoritative textbook when I was a student. Among other matters it treated Buddhism in the Sui and Tang dynasties and he denounced the foreign monks who crossed into the western regions from ancient India as liars and boasters and this made me curious about the historical connections between religion in China and the

3 The 'everlasting' or 'indestructible' sutra dates back to approximately 705 AD and has been influential in Chinese Chan (Zen) Buddhism [ed.].

west. I therefore read through *Changan in the Tang Dynasty and the Civilisation of the Western Regions* (*Tangdai Changan yu Xiyu wenming*) by Xiang Da, who had been accused of being a 'rightist', and also read and compared the collected translations and associated material of Zhang Xinglang, Feng Chengjun and others. From this I began to understand something about the relationship between the older dynasties of China and the world beyond its borders. Lu Xun frequently said, 'If the teacher is absurd, there is no harm in going against him, but if the teacher has been treated unjustly, it is wrong to use the opportunity to throw stones at him' and this maxim seems good enough to me. My examiner, Zhou Yutong, [a scholar of the modern text (*jinwen*) school of Qing dynasty scholarship] differed from the venerable Fan in his interpretation of the history of China's classics but always listed Fan's earlier works, *Introduction to the Classics* (*Qunjing gailun*) and *Brief Study of the Standard Histories* (*Zhengshi kaolűe*) as required reading for his students. In 1958 Fan Wenlan published his 'Oppose Hot Air', advocating sitting in the cold on a wooden bench for ten years and not writing any article that contained one empty sentence. This drew the secret bullets and witty satire of Chen Boda and after that Zhou Yutong from his lectern praised Fan even more for his sagacity in classical studies in such difficult conditions, making me realise what a model of honest and friendly criticism this was.

Thirty years ago I was obliged to switch my focus to work on annotated documents in the history of ideas and culture in the late Qing and early Republican period. This became my main subject from that time onwards and I began to re-read modern Chinese history. Confronted with Fan Wenlan's historical judgement in the first volume of *History of Modern China* (*Zhongguo jindai shi*) that Lin Zexu was 'the first person in the Qing dynasty to open his eyes and see the world', and others who argued that Wei Yuan was the real pioneer in 'opening eyes to see the world', I could not avoid suspecting that this was not really the true picture of China's knowledge of the world in ancient or modern times. I heard that before Fan Wenlan died in 1969 at the age of 76, he had rejected the sacred opinions transmitted by Jiang Qing that he should revise and extend his celebrated general history according to the ultra-leftist requirements of 'historical research for the revolution'. This increased my respect for Fan's strength of character.

However I had to acknowledge that, after he had become been a self-appointed chief of research in Marxism Leninism in Yan'an, he became mired in the error of substituting theory for history. During the Rectification Campaigns in Yan'an [in 1942], Mao Zedong tirelessly promoted the 'theory of two cannons', initially highlighting the cannon of the Opium War between the Qing and Britain which drove China from its long period of feudal stagnation

into a semi-colonial feudal society, only awakening after the cannon fire of the October Revolution in Russia after which 'the east was red and the sun rose' in China. At that time Fan Wenlan and the group of historians that he led were doing their utmost to prove Mao's theories. In the background there was always the malign influence of the phantom Kang Sheng [Mao's security and intelligence chief] keeping their ideological attitudes under close surveillance, so it is difficult not to sympathise with Fan's deviation from his former, sincerely held, belief in the 'seek truth from facts and no belief without truth' tradition of the classical scholars of the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods.[4]

Ever since I mistakenly entered the temple of modern Chinese history and ran into mainstream historians, I have felt that the influence of first volume of Fan Wenlan's *History of Modern China* (*Zhongguo jindai shi*) is everywhere. I would prefer to recommend Hu Sheng's early work, *Imperialism and Chinese Politics*, and his criticism of Feng Youlan's *Six Books of the Tang Zhenyuan period* as eternal, classical products of academic history.[5]

I am digressing and must lose no time in returning to the theme of my essay: in an overall view of Chinese history, who was the first to 'open his eyes and see the world'? This is a false proposition. If we acknowledge that Chinese and foreigners are the same in history and do not just open their eyes at the sight of money, but continuously come to understand the outside world through travel, war or trade, then even the descriptions of the northern, southern, eastern and western regions of the outside world in the *Classic of the Mountains and the Seas* (*Shanhai jing*) cannot be understood as just the illusions of the ancients. When Sima Qian said that Zhang Qian had 'opened a route to the heavens', this did not of course mean that he had gone beyond central and southern Asia, but the Caesars of the contemporary Roman empire, flaunting their garments of silk, stimulated a thirst for mutual knowledge by east and west and the exchange of diplomatic missions. At least, there is evidence of the traces of the first century AD Han envoy Gan Ying on the shores of the Mediterranean.

After that China experienced the rise and fall of dynasties with frequent splits between the north and the south, but whether China was united or subject to the competition of ruling houses, the exchange of goods and ideas

4 'Seek truth from facts' is usually associated with Deng Xiaoping's call for pragmatism after the death of Mao Zedong but it had been quoted by Mao and the phrase first appeared in the *Book of Han*, which was compiled between the first and fifth centuries AD [ed.].

5 The philosopher and historian, Hu Sheng (1918–2000) was vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee and President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences from 1985–98. *Imperialism and Chinese Politics* Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1955 [ed.].

between China and the outside world never ceased, confirmation over and over again of the history of contacts between China and the outside world.

Therefore I have to disagree with Fan Wenlan's view in the first volume of *China's Modern History* that the process of the Manchu Qing unification of China took 200 years and that, as far as global history is concerned, hardly anything is known about it. Li Zexu's journey to Guangdong to collect material published in Macau and find translators, was the symbol of Chinese people 'opening their eyes to see the world' from this point.

It is almost 40 years since Fan Wenlan's soul returned to the mountain of the Daoist immortals and, on the basis of the personal integrity shown by his 'counter current' speech at the time of the Great Leap Forward and his tactful rebuff of Jiang Qing during the Cultural Revolution, when we once again discuss China's modern history can he be the one to say who was 'the first person in the Qing dynasty to open his eyes and see the world'? Logically he cannot but in the final analysis logic cannot replace history and we just have to express sympathy at his failinga.

15 March 2008, at night.

ESSAY 4

The Logic of 'Being Modernised'

According to Mao Zedong's 'two cannons theory', China was forced from the mediaeval wilderness into the modern world by the great cannons of the British Navy. Of course this implies that China did not have the capacity for moving towards modernity of its own accord. Even though Mao Zedong had said that there had been shoots of capitalism within China's society for a long time, in his 'theory' of long term feudal stagnation, these shoots had not been established long enough or that would have meant sinking into a revisionist historical theory.

Today the clear division of Qing history into two halves at the year 1840 has been superseded but false propositions such as who was 'the first person in the Qing dynasty to open his eyes and see the world' are still fashionable and make clear a classic judgment. The idea of someone being the first to be conscious of 'seeking the truth from the West', must necessarily lead to a logical conclusion, that China could only 'be modernised' from outside, and that in our historic dominions there is a lingering ghost.

Does logic correspond to history? It is not possible to rely solely on logical reasoning to arrive at an explanation? One reason that I have to disagree with fashionable post-modernist historians is the theorists' denial of objective historical facts, turning historical theory into systems inferred from subjective logic on which historians depend.

To different degrees, the logic of 'being modernised' involves different approaches with the same result in the understanding of the post-modernists. It is just that here there is no place for debate. If we insist in explaining history on the basis of history itself, there is then the necessity to review the real historical process by which the Chinese people broke away from a mediaeval psychology.

That process cannot really be explained in a short essay. In reality, for over one hundred years there has been positive research on this process by Chinese and foreign scholars from different points of view. To mention one example, there is the group of reform theorists of the late Qing and early Republican period who abhorred the corrupt system of the Manchu Qing. Whether they were restoration theorists who advocated gradual progress or revolutionaries who favoured radical change, all of them drew on the poetic sentiments of Wang Xuezhong current in the southern states of the late Ming period that criticised mediaeval traditions. However in the last thirty years, some

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anti-traditionalist theorists, fiercely denying that the structure was highly stable, and at the same time not actually aware of the mass of scholars in the late Ming southeast four hundred years ago, use Wang Yangming's philosophy to deny the three guides and five virtues of Confucian ethics. This put the rulers of the Manchu Qing dynasty under pressure and has never been extinguished among the populace. It influenced the Meiji Restoration in Japan and also provoked the Hundred Days Reform in China at the end of the Qing dynasty as Tan Sitong's *On Benevolence* (*Renxue*) shows.

Possibly it is like this. After the Manchu Qing forces came through the passes [to occupy China] they set up an office to revise the *Ming History* which is the normal practice for a new dynasty. This continued for 90 years throughout the reigns of four emperors until, in the beginning of the Qianlong reign, they finally managed to publish it, breaking the record for the length of time taken to compile any of the *Official Histories*. However, there are questions about the value of the history, especially the excessive coverage by Wang Xuefan of the 140 years from the reigns of Zhengde to Chongzhen.

The Manchu Qing, a culturally backward ethnic minority from the border areas, had subjugated the Han people and other races in the same way that the Liao, Jin and Yuan had previously, but in the end they could not escape the fate of conquerors being assimilated by a conquered people who were culturally more advanced. However the Manchus were not the same as their predecessors the Nűchen (Jurchen) or the Mongols, as when they entered China they forced the Han and other ethnic groups to shave their heads and change their clothing [to that of the Manchus] and also created clear distinctions between the Manchus and the Han in government, the military, finance and culture, so that the Manchus could control the Han, strenuously resisting becoming Han themselves to preserve the privileges of the conqueror. Who would have thought that, although they did preserve these conquerors' privileges, within three generations the Eight Manchu Banners would have been reduced to a race of parasites. When rebellions in the northwest were subdued in the Yongzheng and Qianlong reign periods, it had already become necessary to use mainly Han troops. By the end of the Qianlong period, and the early years of the Jiaqing reign, the Chinese Green Standard Army had to be deployed to deal with the White Lotus risings in Sichuan, Hunan and Hubei and that army itself was destined to follow in the footsteps of the Eight Banners. By the Daoguang and Xianfeng periods, the Taiping Rebellion had broken out and the Qing court failed take advantage of the situation and did not recognise the militia established by the gentry of Hunan and Hubei and use Han to control Han. By the time the British and French joint armies moved north, the Manchu Qing capital was easy to take.

Towards the end of the Daoguang period, the court relied on shrewdness and trickery, selecting a crown prince out of the order of rank, little knowing that the heir was not only incompetent but also licentious and an opium addict. Even though his doting officials included capable men such as Sushun, the entire court was corrupt, lost the capital and fled to Rehe, wallowing in debauchery. Its glory days were over and it fell into the hands of foolish officials and the Empress Dowager, who carried out a palace coup and embarked on a half century of her dictatorship.

Jottings during the Lantern Festival [15 February 2008].

ESSAY 5

Qing History and Modern History

Since the 1950s mainland scholars have divided Qing history into two halves and in the various branches of humanities and social sciences modern history has evolved with a line being drawn at 1840 rather like the renowned Maginot Line in Western Europe on the eve of the Second World War. The effect was that there was no complete history of the Manchu Qing dynasty: all of the 195 years of history prior to the year Daoguang 19 was styled Qing history and lumped into the category of mediaeval history, whereas the 70 years from 1840 (Daoguang 20) onwards were part of modern history and no encroachment was permitted in either direction.

Unfortunately, just as the Maginot Line was unable to prevent the Germans from invading France, the 1840 line that cut off the two halves of Qing history, although it was based on the principle of 'one divided into two', was unable to prevent the linking of research on both sides of the divide. Scholars on either side of the territorial divide were disadvantaged, especially those who imprisoned themselves as theorists in modern history. The obvious example is the humanities and social science subjects dealing with so-called modern history that accepted Mao Zedong's 'theory of the two cannons' as a model. The pioneers among those who followed this profession have gradually died out but more and more newly published works that have appeared display historical ignorance.

Another example will not come amiss, the idea of 'western learning flowing east', which became popular following the Chinese translation of a book of that title by Rong Hong (originally in English) that was published in 1915 by the Commercial Press in Shanghai.[1] However in the latter part of the Ming dynasty, 'western learning' was used to refer to Western scholarship in science and technology, and did not included Western, that is Christian, religious teachings. In fact cultural interaction between China and Europe on the material level can be traced back to the distant classical period and on the spiritual or intellectual level it appeared at the latest during the period of the Northern Dynasties and the Sui and Tang empires. If 'western learning flowing east' is examined solely from the perspective of ancient Persia and the Arab world

1 Rong Hong (1828–1912) is better known in the West as Yung Wing. He was an American-educated supporter of reform in late Qing China and his best known work is *My Life in China and America* published in 1909.

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as intermediaries, there are already clear traces between the Tang and Song dynasties. In what Hu Daojing described as a 'three-way interchange' that took place after the Mongols opened up the European and Asian mainland, different races of people with 'coloured eyes' [that is non-Asiatic] enlivened and invigorated Yuan dynasty China, as recorded in ancient and contemporary accounts in China and elsewhere.[2]

Global cultures have always interacted so if there has been 'western learning flowing east', there has also been 'eastern learning flowing west'. At the beginning of the 16th Century, the British [statesman and philosopher] Francis Bacon praised China's three great ancient inventions, gunpowder, the compass and the manufacture of paper, which had changed the world. At the end of the same century, the German [mathematician] Leibnitz maintained that in the lines of the trigrams used for divination in the *Zhouyi* [*Yijing*, *I-ching* or *Book of Changes*] he had discovered the forerunner of binary notation [used in computational mathematics]. In the 17th and 18th Century the *chinoiserie* craze that began in the French court and then spread across the European continent was another example of this. Commentators were delighted to refer to all three as examples of the Chinese origins of Western science.

But strangely enough, just as the interchange of European and Chinese culture appeared to be turning in a positive direction, from the beginning of the 15th century, Chinese cultural expeditions abroad, embodied by the maritime voyages of Zheng He, came to an abrupt halt. From then onwards, China turned in on itself and became more and more arrogant and parochial. In spite of this, 500 years later China was still the wealthiest country in the world and still had a major balancing influence on the global economy through public and private trade and with the solid power of its national strength resisted Tsarist Russia's eastward incursions, becoming a major factor in maintaining the balance of power in Inner Asia. The Qing dynasty, following the system of the Ming, maintained the mentality of Neo-Confucianism and used old political tricks to control foreigners by appearing to be conciliatory. During the three reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong—a hundred years—the Manchu Qing appeared to flourish continuously, but by the end of the 18th century was suddenly revealed to be weak and flawed in the light of the White Lotus Rebellion from below and the shock of the Heshen case as set out above. Imperial rule moved towards what the historian Meng Sen [1868–1938] has called the 'Jiaqing-Daoguang consolidation'.

A 'consolidation' according to an ancient commentary to the 'little preface' of the Daya section of the *Shijing*, can be interpreted as, 'if the fundamentals

2 Hu Daojing (1913–2003) was a historian of Chinese science [ed.].

are established they cannot be altered'. But history, as Marx pointed out, always goes its own way. The Jiaqing emperor transmitted [the mandate of heaven] to his son the Daoguang emperor. In the intervening period, although there were natural disasters, the suppression of the White Lotus Rebellion in Sichuan and Hubei and the shocking coup by the Eight Trigrams in collusion with eunuch officials [in 1813–14], the Daoguang emperor reformed the salt monopoly, tightened the government's control of the Customs authority in Guangdong province and changed the Imperial Household Department so that it had a monopoly of domestic and external revenue.[3] As a result of this the Daoguang emperor decided to ban opium, solely it has to be said because of the outflow of silver from the imperial household resources and therefore to stop up a leaky vessel. It led to war and the warships of the 'English barbarians' had the effrontery to attack the coastal ports of Tianjin which protected the capital area. Naturally a stable power was able to prevail over the bankrupt and anxious. Not only did the Han official Lin Zexu become a scapegoat but Manchu aristocrats including Yan Shan also came under attack. However those who rise to the highest positions must expect to keep meeting opposition from those in power. There were thousands of doors to the Manchu Qing Empire so when the great gateway of the coast was broken down it was not surprising that the inhabitants of its courts remained insufferably arrogant.

What is surprising is that in our textbooks of modern history, there has been no investigation of the real historical picture and the first inkling of what was to come. It can be stated categorically that the Qing court was obliged to open five ports for trade, the implication being that the entire nature of society had begun to change fundamentally. Since the books were pandering to an imperious ideology they were bound to misinterpret history in every possible way, 'replacing history with theory' which may be seen as the logical inevitability.

Written on the eve of the Waking of Insects (3rd solar term in the traditional calendar) 5 March 2008.

3 The Imperial Household Department relied heavily on the salt administration for its income [ed.].

ESSAY 6

The Necessity of Rereading Modern History

I have had the honour of being a professional historian for over half a century, from the time I entered university and began the study of history. As everyone knows, during the period of the planned economy intellectuals did not have the freedom to choose their field of study. Within the discipline of history the division of labour has always been meticulous and practitioners had to comply with the assignments of their organisations which repressed individual inclinations and interests. Even when I was in my forties this was still the case. Therefore if you ask me how we should 'reread modern history', I can only respond that it is the malign influence of historical chance because, before I was forty, I dare not entertain wild dreams of returning to the lecture rostrum. Even more I could not imagine that in the second half of my life I would be able to connect with scholars of modern thought.

I changed to my present profession after 1978, just thirty years ago. Although the courses that I offered were on the history of Chinese historiography and Chinese economic history, Chinese and foreign research students continually came to study with me, all of them bringing their own historical questions, compelling me to preserve my academic integrity and many of these topics require me to review my knowledge of ancient history. For many years I was obliged to check and comment on the thoughts of Zhang Bingling, Liang Qichao, Kang Youwei, Tan Sitong and others of the late Qing and early Republican periods because a number of young and talented students had chosen late Qing intellectual history as their main direction of study. This spurred me on to reread the relevant documents from different angles and to make every effort to broaden my thinking to the benefit of my students and myself. For that reason I collected together for many years the texts of my history lectures in a fairly systematic way. Most of these discussed the theory of the evolution of ideas from the late Ming period to the early Qing as for example in my books that have already been made available to readers, including *Exit from the Middle Ages* (revised and enlarged edition), *The Tradition of the Undefined Tone, The Culture of Seeking for Truth: on the history of late Qing Scholarship*, and *Records of Ancient Dreams of Restoration*.

All of the above works of mine can be thought of as the collected texts of my re-readings of modern history. In my view, China's progress after its exit from the middle ages and towards 'modernisation' was a slow and tortuous affair. It was by no means, as had been repeatedly instilled into university, high school

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and primary school students by mainstream history textbooks for over half a century, a process that was perfectly smooth and driven by the peasants with an orientation that moved inexorably from Westernisation to Sovietisation. On the other hand, China did not have the capability to realise 'self-reform', but could only 'be modernised'; the theoretical guide for being modernised, after passing through the Taiwan route of studying the West and then Japan, was to follow Soviet Russia under Lenin and Stalin and 'take the Russian route'. This was an interpretation and evaluation of modern history.

The problem lies in the judgement of the value of history: regardless of how convincing the logic is, in the final analysis the verification of history itself has to be accepted. Chinese historiography has a time-honoured tradition that goes back at least to Sima Qian's *Historical Records* (*Shiji*) in the second century BC, since when the most important business of the historian has been to establish the nature of history is. In order to guard against the appearance once again of Sima Qian style 'defamatory books' exposing the reality of contemporary history, successive dynasties from the Han to the Qing increasingly tightened their control over dynastic histories, resulting in the Qing dynasty compilation of the *History of the Ming Dynasty* (*Ming shi*) which took 90 years of the reigns of four emperors to complete. It appears that this record is currently being broken.

In my humble opinion, in historical research, whether it is ancient or modern, Chinese or foreign, the prime objective must be to establish historical facts. I cannot accept, in line with the theories of contemporary historiography, that history is the subjective product of the historian and there are many historical facts indeed. In my view history belongs to the past, the past has vanished and cannot be altered by subjective cognition. Secondly, in writing history the historian must be influenced by the historical materials, take an objective viewpoint, and evaluate many factors, including the substitutiaon of theory for history. As luck would have it the counter evidence is the importance of historiography. As Hegel has pointed out, 'a pessimistic recollection cannot substitute for the lively freedom of "now" '. Moreover in recollecting history 'I' cannot be at the centre: if it is primarily to benefit the individual then it will be exaggerated or, if it is not, it will be covered up and toned down. If the historical experience is worth attention then perhaps one of the most important lessons to take into account is that the historical research of the past, especially research into modern history, has to be evaluated by the use of various practical considerations rather than any objectively existing historical statements.

In that case is history of any use? If history has no practical purpose, why should historical education not be reduced? In fact Roger Bacon [the mediaeval English philosopher, 1214–1292] provided the reason long ago: 'history

teaches men intelligence'. Therefore to abolish historical education or emphasise only the practical applications of history, in fact has the opposite effect of keeping people in ignorance and necessarily keeping oneself ignorant and this has repeatedly been proved by history.

I recollect that when I first entered the university over fifty years ago the main compulsory course for all students was entitled 'Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism' and the course text was the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (*Bolshevik*) *Short Course*.[1] Part of this course, on 'dialectical materialism and historical materialism' was taught by the chief Soviet expert at the university as it was the Stalin imperial classic. Later, as I began to study modern history I realised that all of the textbooks strove to implement Stalin's historical viewpoint and this naturally became the yardstick for determining whether or not theories were anti-revisionist and able to prevent the rise of revisionism [*fanxiu fangxi*]. After the post-Cultural Revolution ideological liberation, the tradition of relying on higher authorities and texts was smashed but when I shifted my focus to teaching and research on the thought and culture of the late Qing period, I invariably discovered that the spectre of concepts that had their roots in Stalinism continued to influence our system for evaluating modern history on different levels. What was the solution to this? I was still convinced by Marx's dictum that 'truth is determined through controversy, historical facts have to be established by setting out inconsistencies'. There had been successful examples of how to handle the exploration of historical truth using the inconsistencies in the narratives of scholars working on textual research on the classics in the late Qing and Republican period. Many years later when I was re-reading modern history, I attempted to sort out the truth about my accumulated historical doubts from logical and historical angles. This was the origin of my awareness that I was still hoping to dispel my doubts even though I had hit a brick wall. I would not presume to suggest that my short books and articles can restore historical truth, but at least they can indicate that there is a possibility of restoring historical truth.

5 January 2008, at night.

1 This book, published in 1939, was not short: it represents Stalin's ideological position in his struggle against the Trotskyists.

PART 2

Looking Back

ESSAY 7

Looking Back on the History of 'Reform' in the Qing Dynasty

In the past most writings on modern history have treated 'reform' [*gaige*] as a political demand that did not appear in China until the end of the 19th century.

In fact from the perspective of the history of ideas, 'reform' may be considered part of the original mission of the Manchu Qing dynasty that can be seen in the amnesty edict that was promulgated in the first year of the Shunzhi reign. The text of the edict is long and there are different versions but in my humble opinion the text that is published in the Basic Annals chapter 1 of *Shizu* [the Shunzhi emperor] Volume 4 of the *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty* (*Qingshigao*) is the best of all possible versions. This text records the proclamation of the Manchu's establishment of their capital at Yanjing [present-day Beijing], the naming of the dynasty as Qing and that of the first reign as Shunzhi. It pledges that this is the beginning of reform and modernisation.

In public and private documents of the late Qing period, two key phrases that became commom—'reform' [*gaige*] and 'modernisation' [*weixin*]—had already appeared in that first imperial edict issued to the nation by the Manchu Qing in the year that they took control of Beijing. The concluding words of the edict reveal that it was promulgated by the 'regent uncle' Dorgon in the name of the Shunzhi Emperor who was only six years old at the time. Seven years later, after the illness and death of Dorgon, Shunzhi began to rule on his own account; after only a few months the Qing court denounced Dorgon and pronounced him guilty of various crimes.

One hundred and thirty years later, the fourth generation Manchu Qing monarch, the Qianlong emperor, eventually rehabilitated Dorgon and all the measures that had been implemented during Dorgon's rule, including the term 'reform' that he had proposed, ceased to be taboo.

In the light of the Shunzhi edict that has been uncovered, it is clear that the substance of Dorgon's 'reform' was directed primarily at the tyranny of late Ming governments. An example of this was the 'three rations' [*san xiang*] the 'Liaodong Rising ration, 'new ration' of 1629 and the 'training ration' [all taxes levied to cover the rations and pay of troops in suppressing rebellions], that were levied on top of the many existing taxes and forced labour, and were a hundred times more oppressive than the original tax burdens on the peasants. This official oppression was the real reason behind the 'collapse of the Ming

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into roaming rebel bands'. Dorgon's exemption of country people from these taxes won the sympathy of the population living in the villages of north China.

From the Qin and Han dynasties to the Ming and Qing—over two thousand years—China experienced countless changes of dynasty, many of which were the result of the suppression of a revolt and replacing the existing dynasty. A broad view of this history shows clearly that those eras that are considered to have been flourishing were frequently stultifying in terms of ideas, whereas periods of decline often produced scholarship and endless debate. Does freedom of thought really require long periods of political weakness? Unfortunately this was the case with many dynasties during China's middle ages. China enjoyed a thriving economy and a flourishing society during the Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong reign periods in the 18th century. In that long century, China's GDP was half as much again as that of contemporary Europe, so it could afford to be be contemptuous of the rest of the world. However thinking had ossified so that the Manchu Qing emperors were even prouder than the French King Louis XIV and the Russian Tsar Peter I. For them it was not so much 'L'état c'est moi' as 'I am the *world*'.

The wealth of a state does not automatically equate with military strength. From being an economically backward border people, the Manchu Qing took advantage of internal conflict within the Ming dynasty to conquer the whole country and the moving force in this was the Eight Banners. Powerful Manchu officials, 'using history as a mirror' were particularly careful not to follow the same old disastrous road of their Jurchen predecessors and, in the process of conquering China, paid particular attention to ensuring that the Han were controlled by the Manchus. They resisted any possibility of becoming assimilated by the Han whether it was in the political, military or economic sphere. It could not have been predicted that the Manchu-Mongol-Han banner system would have become an ethnic ruling elite and within three generations would have degenerated into a parasitic community. By the 'blooming' period of the Qianlong reign the banners had completely lost their ability to fight and for the state to deal with armed rebellions on the borders there was no alternative but to use Han soldiers of the Army of the Green Standard. During the Opium War [1839–1842] the Daoguang Emperor blamed the incompetence of the Han Chinese troops for the failure to resist the 'British barbarians' on the coast and reinstated his nephew Qishan as Commander in Chief of the Green Standard Army with even more tragic results. Later his son, the Xianfeng emperor, was obliged to depart from the 'ancestral system' when dealing with the Taiping rebels and allowed the Han gentry of southern China to organise militia to 'protect their families and defend the state' However, for the Hunan and Hubei armies of Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang and Li Hongzhang the use of armed

force against the 'foreign barbarians' was a convenient pretext to fight internal battles.

When the White Lotus Rebellion had broken out much earlier in Sichuan and Hubei, men of vision in the Manchu Qing court had pointed out that China's misery was caused by the elite and not the masses and pleased for the court to implement top down reforms. I have pointed out that after the death of Qianlong, when the Jiaqing Emperor came of age and began to rule in his own right, he suddenly moved against Heshen [a corrupt official] who had been exercising despotic powers in the court for over twenty years; this was a turning point for the Qing court in which the old was discarded and the new brought in. Jiaqing seized back his authority as a monarch but also confiscated Heshen's wealth and incorporated it into the imperial treasury: this process therefore began by cleaning up corruption but ended by his own corruption which was disappointing for the court and the wider public. Problems dealing with domestic troubles and foreign invasions can be thought of as stemming from this transgression.

The Jiaqing Emperor was on the throne for 25 years, a long period. When he first took control of the government, in the spring of 1799, and suddenly took action to bring about the downfall of Heshen, it appeared that he was a new broom sweeping clean for the central government. However he was as quick to draw back as he had been to act and dismissed from office a Manchu officer who had requested a thorough investigation into Heshen's corrupt acquisitions. Court officials realised that Jiaqing was a false 'reformer'.

Thus it was understandable that in the later period of Jiaqing's reign, the gifted scholar from Hangzhou, Gong Zizhen (1792–1841) who was not yet twenty years of age should take up his brush to write many volumes of articles fiercely criticising the policy of simply 'following the beaten path' and calling for 'self reform' [*zi gaige*].

21 March 2008, at night.

ESSAY 8

Origins of 'Reform'

The *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty* [*Qing shi gao*] records that in the year the Manchu Qing established their capital in Beijing an edict of general amnesty was issued in the name of the Shunzhi Emperor. The two terms reform [*gaige*] and renewal [*weixin*] were used as synonyms in this edict and, after the Manchus entered the passes, were put forward in the first edict issued by the regent, Dorgon, in the name of the emperor, his six year old nephew. The complete text of this amnesty, as printed in the *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty*, details, item by item, over a hundred burdens on former Ming soldiers and civilians that should be remitted or annulled, constantly denouncing them. Clearly the Manchu conquerors under the banner of 'reform' were attacking the corrupt government of the late Ming that had led to widespread popular uprisings. Under the promise of 'complete renewal' they sought to win over the gentry and the common people, even those who had been 'pressurised to join the roving bands' of rebels.

But Dorgon's parading of the ideas of 'reform' and 'renewal' went beyond this. His father Nurhachi was a minor official on the frontiers of the Ming dynasty who used internal disorder in China to deceive the Ming and set up his own powerbase. His method was to muster Manchu, Mongol and Han tribes and clans outside China's borders and form them into the military alliance known as the Eight Manchu Banners. Naturally the core of this force was the Manchu aristocracy bound together by blood ties but their cultural level was low and there were few of them. Thanks to the guidance of men like Fan Wencheng in the Han Chinese military banners, this group of military men who had built their career on plunder came to understand that the secret of success in capturing the territory of the Ming dynasty was to 'use Han to control Han', the reverse of the Ming strategy of 'using barbarian to control barbarians'.

Therefore, after the defeat of Nurhachi's insurgent army in the battle of Ningyuan [in 1626], the Manchu high officials learned from the technology of their opponents for the first time, captured the 'red barbarian cannon' that the Ming had brought in from Westerners, and used craftsmen who had been taken prisoner to rebuild them and make them more advanced, renaming them 'red cloak cannon'. In fact they used the Ming dynasty's defeated armies as pioneers while at the same time fighting against the Ming officials and gentry, the enemy's jackals. Apart from Hong Chengchou who devised programmes of

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'reform' for the Manchu Qing after they had occupied Beijing, the important individuals were members of the late Ming Chongzhen period 'eunuch party', such as Feng Quan [not a eunuch], which had lost power. Dorgon in the great amnesty edict promulgated in Beijing in the first year of the Shunzhi reign which has already been mentioned devoted himself to stirring up the sentiment of the four classes of people [scholar, farmer, artisan and merchant] of the Ming empire against the corruption of the hated regime.

Dorgon was responsible for the order that Ming subjects should shave their foreheads in the Manchu style and leave a queue [or pigtail] hanging. Later he strictly ordered that if conquered races 'kept their hair they would not keep their heads', in response to a memorial to the throne from a Shandong Confucian scholar who proclaimed himself a disciple of Confucius. This individual was called Wang and warned Dorgon that if he did not deal lightly with the different ethnic groups, the small minority of Manchu banner conquerors were likely to be attacked by members of the majority the population, Han and other officials because they looked different.

After the sudden death of Dorgon in 1650 (Shunzhi 7) there was internal dissention among the Eight Manchu banners and the word 'reform' appears to have disappeared from official documents of the Manchu Qing. But did the policy that Dorgon had followed before his death, of 'using the Han to control the Han', change? It did not. When the Shunzhi Emperor assumed power in his own right he tended to emphasise 'history as a mirror'. On occasion he discussed with high-ranking Han officials which historical emperors could stand as examples, rejecting Tang Taizong and but esteeming Ming Taizu. Therefore 'Qing following the Ming system' became the 'ancestral model'. The Oboi dictatorship marred the Shunzhi and Kangxi period and there was a failed attempt to hold back the nobles of the Eight Banners. However from the time Kangxi took power personally, through the three reigns of his son Yongzheng and his grandson Qianlong,—a period of of 130 years—in the centralised state power embodied in the Manchu-Han twin track system, the principle of controlling the Han with the Manchus not only did not weaken but continually strengthened ideologically through more and more frequent literary inquisitions.

What was strange was that the word 'renewal', after disappearing from the scene for a century and a half during the four reigns of Shunzhi, Kangxi, Yonghe and Qianlong, suddenly reappeared in February 1799, the 4th year of the Jiaqing reign in an edict of that fifth generation Manchu monarch. The Jiaqing emperor had just shaken off the domination of the Emperor Qianlong, who had abdicated in favour of his son, and was able to follow his own desires. On the one hand Jiaqing denounced the heinous crimes of the powerful minister

Heshen but on the other hand appeased the civil and military officials of the Manchu court, saying that as long as they were loyal to the emperor they would be forgiven for their past misdeedsin a spirit of 'renewal'.

This term, which first appeared in the *Classic of Poetry*, was used frequently in official documents during the late Qing period. Inside and outside the court only informed scholars understood the troubled history of the term in the Manchu Qing synasty.

19th of the first month in the *wuzi* year of the agricultural calendar [2008], at night.

ESSAY 9

Resurrecting the 'Statement of Accounts' Tax Evasion Case 1661

During the late Qing period, even before the 1911 Revolution abolished such legitimacy as existed in the Great Qing Empire, investigation and argument about the true face of the rise to prominence of the Manchus and the establishment of their state, became common practice among the people, scholars and officials Zhang Binglin [Zhang Taiyan) became a celebrity with his *Refutation of Kang Youwei's writings on the theory of revolution* and a preface for Zou Rong's *Revolutionary Army*. Not only did he rebuke the Qing emperor by name he even accused the successive reigns of the Manchu Qing of fabricating history. Therefore he was imprisoned. At the same time scholars were independently stimulated to enquire into the modern history of China since the fall of the Ming and the rise of the Qing. After the Manchu Qing emperors became prisoners in the imperial apartments in the Purple Forbidden City, the government of the Republic, following historical precedents, opened an office to compile the history of the dynasty that they had defeated, signifying that the ban on research into Qing history had been lifted. Therefore the many and varied accumulated doubts and questions of two hundred and ninety plus years of the so called modern age from Nurhachi's rebellion against the Ming to the Empress Dowager Longyu's agreeing to the abdication were quickly put on the agenda of historical research.

Meng Sen (1868–1937), [whose formal name Xinshi means something like 'history at the heart' or 'feeling for history'] was the pioneer of research in Qing history in the early years of the Republic. This man from Wujin in Jiangsu had studied law and government in Japan at the end of the Qing dynasty. Obviously he had taken notice of the controversy about the history of the Manchu Qing in Japanese scholarly circles after the Meiji Restoration and on returning to China, in the movement for 'replacing autocracy with a constution' and at the beginning of the Republic, he became one of the inner circle of the Jiangsu and Zhejiang Republican faction along with Zhang Binglin and Zhang Jian and was elected to the Chamber of Deputies of tne National Assembly that was created in 1913. In 1914 (Minguo 3) when Yuan Shikai tore up the provisional constitution and dissolved the National Assembly, Meng Sen faded away from the political scene and became an exemplary scholar of Qing history. He had experienced throwing himself into the near decade of political reform at the

end of the Qing and the beginning of the Republic. During his participation in politics there were many learned Chinese and foreign articles on law, finance and government and he cast his glance on the history of the vanquished dynasty, first publishing *Historical Material* in 1914 followed by his *Collected Works* (first published in 1916 and in a total of three collections). These books tested theories on the government and people of the early Qing period that had not been resolved and led people to treat his historical ability and knowledge with increased respect. For example investigations of the three early Qing court cases related to imperial examinations, 'crying over grain in the temple', and 'closure' which remain important starting points for research into the history of cultural policy in the early Qing.

The 'memorial on closing the case', or 'statement of accounts case', at the end of the Shunzhi reign period and the beginning of the Kangxi period was particularly important. The early Qing court completely eliminated the power of the Han Chinese gentry of southern China, using as a pretext the collection of arrears of cash and grain taxes. Official ranks were abolished in each province, houses were searched and property confiscated: men who had been elevated to the scholarly rank of *gongsheng* and officials in post were beaten and robbed, the numbers running to thousands upon thousands. This was especially true in Suzhou, Songjiang, Changzhou, Taicang and other prefectures of Jiangnan, the land of culture and talent south of the Yangzi River. Gentry who owned small amounts of land were completely eliminated. Later when the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom occupied southern Jiangsu they encouraged tenant farmers, including secondary landlords or rich peasants, to rent out land to improve their family's income and ensure that it was cultivated. Under this policy landlords had to register with the imperial military and political authorities but, in comparison with all previous two hundred years, the policy of attacking the gentry of southern China seems moderate.

However as Meng Sen has pointed out, five years after the collapse of the Qing dynasty in his 'Memorial on closing the case', this case at the beginning of the Qing dynasty is not recorded at all in the officially compiled history of the Qing court. 'Over 200 years people have been able to say that there was such a case but there is no one who can say precisely what had happened' (quotation from *Ming Qing shi lunzhu jikan* Zhonghua Shuju 1959). Meng Sen took a great deal of trouble to go through a dozen or so *biji* notes written by Qing dynasty people and consulted official histories and biographies of the Qing dynasty for relevant information to present the historical picture behind this case which had been buried for a long time. Subsequently when Qing historians refer to the 'Memorial on Closing the Case' the vast majority use this article of Meng Sen's. The only exception is Deng Zhicheng who gives an account of this

case drawing on three imperial edicts from the Shunzhi and Kangxi periods in the *Veritable Records of the Qing* and published in his Two *Thousand Years of Chinese History* (*Zhonghua er qian nian shi*) Volume 5 in a chapter entitled 'The initial foundation of Shunzhi' (this volume appeared in 1955). Meng Sen did not cite this historical source and the narrative of the history is much more ambiguous than that of Meng Sen.

Deng Zhicheng's confusion is understandable. He characterises the Jiangnan 'Memorial on Closing the Case' as 'a great prison for deliberately controlling the gentry class' but this publication that circulated among mainstream historians was already referring to the 'dog-eat-dog' conflict between the Qing court and the gentry. At that time a campaign against Hu Shi's historical viewpoint was in the ascendant and for the economic historians of the Qing dynasty it was important to distinguish between those who committed original crimes of 'history for history' and those who were destined to be the birds that stuck their heads out and were shot.

The problem was that Marx had stressed that 'the facts of history are resovled in the setting out of contradictions'. Meng Sen, enjoyed the reputation of the historian who had opened up research in modern Qing history because he followed the scholarly style of the school of Zhang Taiyan (Zhang Binglin) hating the autocracy of the Manchu Qing. He had searched far and wide for relevant records in Qing dynasty official documents and the writings of private individuals and from those sought to divine the fundamental nature of these people. His judgement is not necessarily credible but his critics cannot ignore the majority of his articles. After over fifty years his work still draws criticism and he is criticised for not having understood the transformation of the Qing court's policies towards the gentry of southern China and what is more he did not understand the historical significance of this case that played such a significance role in the Ming Qing transition. This feature of the Qing court masked the 'structural changes in modern and ancient social relations and the socio-economic structure', 'the tendency to decline of the most decadent elements of the feudal landlord class and the stabilisation of the common landlord class.' [see 'Lun Qingchu zouxiao'an de lishi yiyi' in *Zhongguo jingji wenti* 1981 Volume 1]. This echoes the views of historians of the late Ming period. When I came across this opinion initially, I was dumbstruck as it was difficult to believe that the Manchu Qing conquerors had made this attack on cultural circles in Jiangnan that approached extermination and was of such great historical significance.

In my early years I learned about the history of Chinese agrarian relations from my teacher Chen Shoushi and also sought his advice on the changes in the Manchu Eight Banner system after the invasion of China [in 1644]. Chen

Shoushi drew my attention to the Jiangnan 'tax evasion case' and suggested that I look at Ye Mengzhu's *Yue shi bian* from the early Qing period. I knew this book was available in the Shanghai Anecdotes series but I had never examined it carefully. It was not until last winter when I came across a copy of Lai Xinxia's 2007 Zhonghua Shuju edition that I discovered that it in fact contained a detailed record of the early Qing tax evasion case.

The author Ye Mengzhu was a Shanghainese. According to Lai Xinxia's textual research, he was born in 1623 (Ming Tianqi 3) and lived until 1693 (Kangxi 32) and was therefore about 70 when he died.

He was actually a first degree licentiate of either Songjiang or Taicang prefecture and and was dismissed in the tax evasion case and had his scholarly honours annulled. As he was approaching old age he was therefore just a commoner.

Yue shi bian was published in 1935 by the Shanghai Gazeteer (*Shanghai tongzhi*) Press on the basis of the copy stored in the Songjiang Library. In the fifteenth year of the Republic 1936 Meng Sen wrote an article on the tax evasion case but, not surprisingly, was unaware of the existence of such important historical materials and *biji* notes. What was surprising was that those who had previously published criticisms of Meng's views, and also those who concurred with them, all had teaching responsibilities in Shanghai and none of them were aware of the existence of such important historical source material in Shanghai. They were just dancing to the political tune of the time.

31 July 2008, at night.

ESSAY 10

'A Tertius is Not Worth a Single Cent'

This section continues the discussion on the problem of the Statement of Accounts Case in early Qing Jiangnan that was raised in the previous section. In 1645 (Shunzhi 2) Jiangnan experienced brutal massacres during the conquest by the Qing forces. The Qing court announced tax reductions and the resumption of the imperial examinations to win the hearts and minds of the people. Tu Guobao, appointed by the Qing court as Governor of Jiangning [Nanjing], was originally one of the Lake Tai bandits who were incorporated into the forces of Hong Chengchou: they had kidnapped wealthy gentry for ransom and also resisted grain taxes and appeared to be in opposition to the Qing court. It was said that he was secretly in communication with Cheng Chenggong and planned to revolt with him but was dismissed from office by the Qing court. In the winter of 1652 (Shunzhi 8) Tu committed suicide by hanging himself.

In the Tang dynasty, according to Han Yu, 'Taxes come from all under heaven but Jiangnan occupies 90%' and in the middle years of the Ming dynasty the noted scholar Qiu Jun [1421–1495] also said that the great majority of taxes from Jiangnan are taken from the three prefectures of Suzhou, Songjiang and Changzhou. Gu Yanwu [1613–1682], writing in the early Qing dynasty in *Ri zhi lu* (*Record of Daily Knowledge*) argued more precisely that 'the two prefectures of Suzhou and Songjiang are the most important in land tax'. The fundamental reason is that the regimes of successive dynasties relied on Jiangnan as the source of grain, finance for the military and wealth in general. The Manchu Qing rulers were not stupid and realised that if they did not allow the general population of Jiangnan some material benefits the success of the conquest that they had achieved by force would be unstable. However they continued with the war of conquest and their aristocrats quickly learned how to be corrupt and squander money but could not tolerate the 'southern barbarians' showing off their wealth.

Two incidents caused the Manchu Qing conquerors to change their attitudes. The first was the township [*xiang*] examinations that were held in Shutian[1] and Jiangnan in Shunzhi 14. Examining officials and candidates colluded in

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* Primus, secundus and tertius are translations of the titles awarded to the top three candidates in the *jinshi* examinations.

1 The name of the prefecture surrounding Beijing in the late Ming and early Qing periods.

fraudulent practices and the emperor and the Manchu officials became aware of the shameless tricks of the gentry of Jiangnan. The second was in Shunzhi 16 when Zheng Chenggong sent forth his armies on a northern expedition. People of all classes from the various prefectures and counties of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui and Jiangxi responded and terrified the young emperor so much that he prepared to retreat 'beyond the passes' [into the ancestral territory of the Manchus]. Meng Sen pointed out in *Zou xiao an* that in these two incidents cause and effect were related as they impelled the Manchu Qing aristocracy to use the 'statement of accounts case' to move from trying to win over the gentry of Jiangnan to attacking them, conforming on the whole with the historical picture.

The weakness in Meng Sen was not in his appropriate use of terms or his faulty value judgement, but there are problems in his historical views. He did not point out that Tu Guobao was the first to use the name 'tax resistance'. He had not discovered that the Qing court had compelled Tu Guobao to commit suicide but then adopted Tu Guobao's strategy of attacking the gentry of Jiangnan beginning with economic targets. He had not verified the source of the events from firsthand material. It also appears that he had not taken any notice of the impact of these cases on the power struggles of the Shunzhi and Kangxi periods.

This may supplement the explanation:

1. The statement of accounts case changed from being Tu Guobao's land policy into 'national policy' through a transitional process; 2. The transitional process was complicated. At the beginning of Shunzhi's personal rule, the impact that the irregularities in the northern and southern examination halls[2] in 1657 or Zheng Chenggong's march north in 1659 would have on the Qing court's policies on Jiangnan could not be forseen. The so called 'statement of accounts case' clearly indicates that the punishment of the gentry of Jiangnan was a statement of the Manchu Qing court's firm and consistent policy, this is a conjecture; 3. The psychology of the autocratic monarch was sure to have influenced the 'state policy'. After the Shunzhi emperor personally tried the imperial examination case and heard reports that Cheng Chenggong was besieging Jiangning [the name by which Nanjing was known during the early Qing dynasty], in a manifestation of wild impetuosity, with the 'edict of self recrimination' that he was soon to promulgate when close to death, he regretted that he had forgotten his own origins that were closer to the Han than the

2 This presumably refers to the Shuntian examinations in Beijing and the Jiangnan examinations in Nanjing [ed.].

Manchu. The psychological history of the Manchu autocrats is a weak link in research on Qing and modern history.

In the first month of Shunzhi 17 (1660) four months after the combined forces of Zheng Chenggong and Zhang Huangyan had retreated from Nanjing, the Qing emperor, shocked at the scale of support for the Zheng Zhenggong regime in Jiangnan, appointed Zhu Guozhi of the Han Plain Yellow Banner as governor [*xunfu*] of Jiangning. On taking office, this new provincial governor who held the degree of senior licentiate *gongsheng*, on the one hand secretly constructed beacon mounds on coastal and estuary sites to block the Zheng Chenggong naval forces that might try to land, and on the other hand modelled himself on Tu Guobao and in the name of chasing debts and demanding arrears of grain tax created a register of the families of the gentry of the four prefecture of Suzhou, Songjiang, Changzhou and Zhenjiang. He brought this to the attention of the Qing court and, setting a precedent, demanded the removal from office of over 13,000 members of the country gentry, and senior licentiates (see *Yueshibian* juan 6).[3] In the first month of the next year, the Shunzhi emperor died and the regency of his 8 *sui* old successor was entrusted to four Manchu nobles including Songgotu and Oboi. The two boards of Rites and Finance were instructed to 'collect cash and grain tax urgently from prefectures and county and higher level administrations under the various provinces ruled directly by the capital' (see Jiang Liangqi *Donghualu* Shunzhi 18, January and March).[4] Governor Zhu was himself also faced with the prospect of disciplinary action and, in addition, in one county of the four prefectures of Suzhou, Songjiang Changzhou and Zhenjiang, where he had personally gone to supervise the creation of the registers, he initially cleared out and impeached and deprived of rank over 2100 county level gentry of whom the majority were officials at court but it is hard to say whether he was just waiting for his chance to take revenge on them.

What was to be done? According to the *Yueshibian*, Zhu Guozhi, trying to protect himself after the construction of the registers of 1924 county level gentry and 15,048 *shengyuan*, reported to the court that payment of 49,150 liang of

3 *Yueshibian* (*Seeing the World*) is a Qing dynasty *Biji*, compiled by Ye Mengzhu (1624–93), which chronicles the social and economic transformation of Jiangnan, particularly Songjiang prefecture). during the late Ming and early Qing period [ed.].

4 *Donghualu* (*Records of the Eastern Flower Gate*) is an unofficial history of the Qing dynasty covering the period between 1616 and 1735, unofficial because it includes material not published in the Qing Veritable Records. It takes its name from the location of the office of the Institute of Historiography outside the Eastern Gate of the Imperial Palace where it was compiled [ed.].

silver had been made as additional payments in Hebei Province. Strange to say that after the new regulations had come into force they became the governing rules in all provinces. It continued as if the Emperor was a minor and government was still by four regents even after he had begun to rule in his own right. He did not want to know about exceptional cases: as soon as the impeachment was displayed, the officials were degraded and deprived of their rank.

Was there any reason for Governor Zhu to do this apart from preserving the posture consistent with that of a new ruler of the Manchu Qing? He adopted decisive measures to ensure that 3,700 members of the gentry, who had been registered in the four prefectures and one county, were reported, impeached and arrested and prepared to detain them in custody for transmission to the capital to be handed over to the Board of Punishments where they would be dealt with severely. It is not known what kind of behind the scenes negotiations transpired in May of that year 1662 (Kangxi 1), but the Qing court suddenly issued a special decree releasing the arrested men. That state of terror created in Jiangnan that year and the circumstances of the imprisonment of the arrested literati are examined in detail in the *Zouxiaoan* of Meng Sen that has already been cited.

During this period, the majority of the officials in post who had been included in Zhu Guozhi's blacklist had not been lucky enough to escape. Among the population of Jiangnan at that time it was common knowledge that '*A tertius is not worth a single cent*'. Meng Sen had carried out textual research on Ye Fang'ai from Kunshan. In 1659 (Shunzhi 16) he graduated as *jinshi* in the third place in the list of successful candidates, which is commonly known as a *tanhua* [sometimes rendered by the Latin term *tertius* in translation], and was appointed as a compiler second class in the Hanlin Academy. However the following year he was discovered by Zhu Guozhi to have owed one thousandth of a silver *tael* in tax, equivalent to one cash, and he was demoted to the seventh place. In similar circumstances the *Yueshibian* records the case of Zhang Ren'an, an official at the Taichang Temple, who was also reduced in rank for owing one thousandth of a *tael* of tax and in the *Langqian jiwen er bi* [by Cheng Kangqi] there is a record of the Hanlin academician Qin Songling who was demoted for having owed three *fen* of tax. There are many similar examples. Some praise this as demonstrating that there was a firm policy of punishing gentry who evaded taxes in the early Qing period. That may be the case but this hardly explains the confiscation of people's land and houses and the seizure of people as slaves by the Manchu Eight Banners.

At the beginning of the Republic in the revision of the history of the victorious dynasty, Zhu Guozhi was included in the Loyal Biographies *Zhongyichuan* as a surviving member of the former regime. Because he had served as the

Governor of Yunnan and refused to oppose the Qing in collaboration with Wu Sangui, he was killed. But the author of the *Draft History of the Qing* did not make clear in his brief obituary the circumstances of the ten years from his appointment as Suzhou governor to that of Yunnan governor. From Lou Dong's anonymous *Yantang jianwen zaji* that was referred to by by Meng Sen and the *Yueshibian* which he did not use, people began to realise that apart from the Jiangnan 'Statement of accounts case' he was also the executioner in the Temple Lament Case. He personally knew of the two cases attacking tens of thousands of members of the Jiangnan intelligentsia and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this was a case of 'killing the hounds once the hares had all been bagged' [eliminating trusted aides once they have outlived their usefulness]. It happened that he was in mourning after the death of his father or mother as is normal. But Manchu banner bondsmen had special rights to wear mourning dress for 27 days and were then permitted to resume their official duties, so it was strange that at the end of the mourning period he heard that the Qing court had already appointed someone else as governor of Jiangning. He knew that he had become the scapegoat for the two cases and in the confusion did not wait for the appointment of his replacement as he was frightend that his account ledgers would not be found in order. The Qing court was angry when they heard of this and initially reduced him in rank by five grades and then dismissed him so that he became a commoner. He had probably been dismissed by Oboi on a pretext but in the end he was skilful at intriguing to secure a position and after Kangxi had begun to rule in his own right, he returned as governor of Yunnan, unexpectedly sowing the seeds for his death. 'Loyalty'!

Zhu Guozhi and Oboi, this master and slave of the Manchu third banner both died but there was no 'annhilation of their bodies and reputations'. They became the leading 'meritorious dogs' of a generation of Manchu Qing who had been hostile to and trampled on refined and talented intellectuals and for over three hundred years of history were bywords for infamy.

6 August 2008, at night.

ESSAY 11

Manchus Inside, Han Outside and the Emphasis on Civil Over Military Affairs

Keeping Manchus on the inside and Han on the outside and the emphasis on civil over military affairs can be said to be the 'ancestral rules' handed down from the two Manchu Qing reigns of Shunzhi and Kangxi. However from the sudden rise of the Manchus to the point at which they 'unified' the country, they had relied on subjugation by military force and the eight Manchu and Mongol banners and the Han Chinese Army of the Green Standard had emerged as the 'barrel of the gun' of the Manchu Qing Empire. By the time of the fourth generation of emperors, Qianlong, the powerful Manchus had ruled from Beijing for a hundred years. As before, in the imperial edicts on the Manchu, Mongol and Han banners there were constant exhortations to the descendents of the bannermen to study only horsemanship and archery as the way to an official career; there was no need for them to study the books of Confucius as did the Chinese people of the central plains or to have a scholarly background and rise through the examination system.

Logically speaking therefore, the Manchus on the inside would prioritise the martial arts while the Han on the outside would treat cultural matters lightly, just as in the 130 or more years of the three reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong, following the gradual trend towards imperial stability. This was the opposite to the actual history of the general orientation of the construction of the politics of civil officials. As far back as the end of the 3rd Century BC, Lu Jia explained frankly to the Han emperor Gaozu 'It is possible to attain all under heaven on horseback but not to control it from horseback.' From this time onwards to the production of the twenty four official histories under Qianlong's imperial command, the truth of this celebrated dictum has never been disproved. However the Qing followed the Ming regulations and both before and after entering the passes had put into effect civilian government for the conquered Ming and border regions, greatly hindering the Qing court's state policy that Manchus should control Han.

Right up to the eve of the Qing collapse, the form of the Manchu Qing power structures were regularly modified. There were two key factors in this: one was the Manchu Han twin track system in the government's organisation and the second was the Eight Banner garrison in the military organisation.

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It is often said that the Qing legal and political systems were based on those of the Ming. From the point of view of the way the Qing court established official posts and defined their duties, the Grand Secretariat, Six Boards, Nine Ministers etc, all appeared to confirm that description. The difficulty lies with the content of the system. Personnel appointments in various departments at the beginning of the Qing dynasty followed the Ming practice without any change, but all necessarily involved twin Manchu and Han posts: for example the Presidencies of the Six Boards must have both Manchu and Han appointees as must each of the Vice Presidencies. The criteria for appointments, including the Manchu officials within the Manchu-Mongol-Han banners only took inot account blood relationships and military exploits and did not even assess literacy; the Han Chinese were usually ranked in the top class of graduates. Moreover Han Chinese were not permitted to encroach on some departments such as the Imperial Household Department or the Department of External Affairs [*Lifanyuan*] and in some appointments, such as the President and Vice Presidents of the Six Boards and heads and secretaries of cabinet departments, what was most important was that 'blood was thicker than water' and military exploits and family background trumped scholarship. In all appointments at every level Han Chinese officials took orders from Manchu 'bondsmen' [*Mannu*]. In key departments at the centre of the empire that were responsible for political, military, financial and civil matters, the system was eccentric; banner members supervised Han officials and idiots restrained the able people. I categorise this type of Qing dynasty centralised official system as the Manchu-Han twin track system. Did it become history after the 1911 Revolution or is it still in existence?

The rise of the Manchu Qing depended on the Eight Manchu Banners. Almost half a century ago, my mentor Chen Shoushi proved conclusively that of the tribal military systems of the different ethnic groups on China's northern frontier in the middle ages, the Manchu Eight Banners were the final model. This touches on the century old controversy over the history of the Eight Banner system; that will not be discussed any further here but it is worth noting that in the process of conquering the whole country (apart from its own backyard the future Three North-Eastern Provinces), within the passes and as far as Xinjiang, a garrison of banner troops was established as a stronghold in each crucial region that was conquered.

I know a little about the history of the Manchu banner garrisons but to date I have only seen the brief account in the Annals of the Officers section of the *Draft History of the Qing*. According to these annals and some unofficial histories that deal with the banners it is clear that from the first year of the Shunzhi

reign (1644), the imperial capital Beijing was garrisoned by the Eight Banners. Garrisons then followed the conquest and were established in Jiangsu, Anhui, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Sichuan, Hubei, Shaanxi, Gansu, Suiyuan and other provinces.

From the location of these garrions it is clear that their main aim was to guard against the resurgence of anti-Qing forces, including the Southern Ming and Muslims, Yi and other ethnic groups in the northwest and southwest. The northern expedition of Zheng Zhenggong and the rebellion of the Three Feudatories in the Kangxi reign are firm proof of the necessity of the banner garrisons. However because the garrions in the south were constructed on racial lines, they became socially isolated in later generations and also lost their combat effectiveness as they were paid but had little or no function. The Opium War between the Qing and Britain revealed that the banner garrisons had sunk to the status of parasitical communities and when the Old Summer Palace, the Yuanmingyuan, was burned to the ground and Cixi had to flee Beijing in the face of an onslaught by foreign troops it became clear that senior officers were incompetent to command and the Beijing garrision could not even cope with a disorderly mob of Boxers. When the 1911 Revolution broke out Beijing garrison troops were sent to the provinces and proved uttely inadequate.

In the reigns of Qianlong and Jiaqing it was clearly understood that the basis of the civilian rule of the empire was that Manchus were on the inside and Han Chinese on the outside. Officials were supposed to be completely loyal to the sovereign but some courageously advised the emperor to make appointments on merit and eliminate the Manchu-Chinese divide, although most feared to speak out on this central issue of personnel. This remained a major problem right through to the Opium War when civil and military commissioners dispatched by the Daoguang emperor to deal with the English barbarians. Daoguang relied more and more on Manchu aristocrats to replace Han Chinese officials: these included Qishan, Qiying, Yishan and Yijing.

Chinese and foreign scholars of the Qing dynasty have long maintained that this dual personnel policy [dyarchy] was a special characteristic of dynastic politics—in fact it applied to all of the northern border peoples that conquered and established dynasties in China, the Northern Dynasties, Liao, Jin and Yuan as well as the Manchus. The Great Qing Encyclopaedia of Statutes in which these precedents are fully documented was revised many times in the period from Kangxi to Guangxu. I call the arrangement the Manchu-Han 'double track' system and it really created an insoluble problem. Manchus had to be given precedence in appointments and the only criteria that were used for were what were hereditary offices were blood relationships, clan or banner

origin, especially relationship to the imperial clan, which was thought to indicate loyalty to the sovereign.

This traditional arrangement did not take into account either the ability or the integrity of candidates for appointments and soon after the Manchus took control of China they revived the traditional examination system. In spite of this official documents continued to emphasise that 'the dynasty pacified the country by force of arms' and that the power of military conquest was the dominant tradition The elite were descended from the original conquering tribes and as late as the Qianlong reign imperial edicts to the Eight Banners stll insisted on the scrupulous observance of horsemanship, archery and the Manchu language to maintain the separatness of a Manchu military elite.

By the end of the Qing dynasty when the Cixi clique was forced to promote 'reform of the official system', waving the banner of constitutionalism and pressing for an accountable cabinet (all terms derived from Western of Japanese reforms), it was still Manchu hereditary officials, the sons or other relatives of aristocrats, who were appointed to what was essentially a 'cabinet of imperial kinsmen'. On 8 May 1911, five months after the dissolution of the Grand Council, the New Army revolted at Wuchang.

6 July 2008, at night.

ESSAY 12

Manchu Han Twin-Track System (1)

The title of this section refers to an important historical fact in rereading modern history. From the early 17th century the Manchus replaced the Ming dynasty, after the leader of a northern tribe, Nurhachi, who was guarding the frontiers betrayed the Ming and established a new state, following earlier attempts by Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong. The Manchu name was given to all the northern tribes, whether they had previously been known as Oroqen, Evenki, Hoche or some other name. Even at its beginning it was a multi-ethnic community with a core of Manchu military aristocrats that changed its name to Great Qing on the instruchtion of Huang Taiji in 1636. The original Eight Banners of the Manchus were expanded to included Evenki, Daur etc., but there was a clear distinction between the Manchus, and especially the Aisin Gioro imperial family from which most of the high officials came, and the Mongol, Han Chinese and other military banners. The distinction was then extended to all of the minority peoples who as conqured races were supposed to abide by traditional culture and this has been interpreted as a process of sinicisation.

In 1644 (Ming Chongzhen 17) the Manchu usurper Dorgon, who was led in through the passes by the Han traitor Wu Sangui, began the process of conquering the whole country. This process was a tortuous one and extended to 1693 (Kangxi 22) with the 'pacification of Taiwan' an important part of the unification of the empire. Of course the construction of a genuine united empire continued through the Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns and after the successive suppressions of rebellions by minorities in the northwest and southwest it was successfully realised. The Manchu-Han 'twin-track' system appears to have been the pivotal mechanism throughout the 267 years after 1644.

The continuity between the Ming and the Qing, specifically of the official system, is constantly emphasised in official records. Central government, including the Six Boards and Nine Ministries, the Hanlin Academy and the Imperial Superintendencies of Instruction and Examinations continued in direct line from the late Ming. The names may have been the same but the reality was different. For example during the late Ming, the authority of the Grand Secretariat was equivalent to that of the monarch, but this was reduced by the early Qing emperors and in the later years of the Kangxi reign all imperial edicts originated in the emperor's Southern Study. In the early part of the Yongzheng reign a separate body, the Grand Council, was established. Its

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confidential secretaries reduced the authority of the Grand Secretary and it issued imperial edicts that influenced the military and political orientation of the state. By the Qianlong reign this system was well-established.

For the 170 and more years from the Qianlong to the Xuantong reign, the Grand Council was at the core of the Manchu Qing central elite, but its senior officials were mere lackeys of the sovereign, as can be seen in the role played by Prince Gong in the reigns of Xianfeng, Tongzhi and Guangxu. The man who did all he could to rescue the empire as the head of the Hunan and Huai armies, Zeng Guofan, only ever achieved the rank of Assistant Grand Secretary; Zuo Zongtang did become a member of the Grand Council but his position was temporary for several months; Li Hongzhang did not achieve the highest official rank even after serving for twenty years in the Grand Council. This was the impact of the Manchu-Han 'twin-track system' right up to the fall of the Qing dynasty.

The most obvious and superficial characteristic of the system was the necessity to have two departmental heads throughout the power structure. The Grand Secretaries, senior officials of the Grand Council, presidents of the Six Boards and their deputies, the Left and Right Censors of the Court of Censors and all their subordinate bodies all had to have dual heads, allotted to Manchu and Han. Each Board for example had two principal departmental heads and four deputies, all defined by their ethnic origin with the Manchus in control. Although this may have appeared to be a continuation of the Ming system, in reality the Manchus controlled the Han Chinese through a doubling of the senior staff in all the departments of the central administration; this was an innovation by the Manchus after they took control of Beijing.

Needless to say, Manchus were appointed to supervise Han officials, irrespective of the practicalities and whether they were able to fulfil their duties. Most Manchu officials were the descendants of bannermen if not hereditary nobles whereas the senior Han officials they were supervising had mostly advanced on the basis of their performances in the imperial examinations. Given that this is the case it is strange that the 'twin-track' system has not reveived more attention in books on Qing history. This may be because of a taboo on discussing ethnic issues. However towards the end of the Qing dynasty, Sun Yat-sen, Zhang Taiyan and others openly advocated a 'revolution to expel the Manchus', which can be compared with the later anti-historical currents of Great Han chauvinism and Sino-centrism.

Blockheads are more fearless the less they know, but readers who wish to acquire a little general knowledge about Chinese history, will once they have read the *Records of the Eastern Flowery Gate* (where histories were compiled)

by Jiang Liangqi and Wang Xianqian, wish to spend a little time consulting simple Manchu Qing annalistic records. Those who do not have the patience to read that type of material or discuss history are in danger of talking nonsense.

29 August 2008, at night.

ESSAY 13

Manchu-Han 'Twin-Track System' (2)

The twin-track system had not been originated by the Manchus; similar political structures had existed in one form or another in kingdoms on the northern frontiers of China established during the middle ages by various tribes such as the Northern Dynasty of the Xianbei, the Liao of the Qidan, the Jin or the Jurchen and the Mongol Yuan dynasty.

Their common characteristic was that the conquering tribe's aristocracy who were related by blood monopolised the power at the centre, relying on their armed might as conquerors in a system where 'all were soldiers' to assimilate various conquered peoples and persuade the cream of their societies to participate as civil officials in the rule of the conquerors.

The system used by the Manchus was not simply a reiteration of the Jin and Yuan mechanisms by the Qing. Its structural criteria was 'Manchus controlling Han' and the Manchu banners that formed the mainstay of power were in fact a military community made up of Manchus, Mongols and Han with powerful Manchu aristocrats at the nucleus. The appointment and selection of officers and officials and the definition of duties naturally separated Manchu and Han and although the Han officers and officials were all from the same ethnic group, there was a futher distinction between those within and outside the system. That is because the Han military bannermen were the hereditary bondservants of the Manchus, enjoying certain privileges of the Manchu hereditary aristocracy that raised them in status compared with the other conquered Hans (and other conquered races). Han Chinese officials who had come up through the examination system or had purchased their offices, especially during the Three Feudatories period, could achieve high office—even governor or prime minister—but that did not necessarily mean that the nature the twin-track system had altered.

Previous books on the history of the Qing argue almost unanimously that it had altered. There was a tendency for such books to denounce the 'revolution to expel the Manchus' movement at the end of the Qing, arguing that it was in effect the beginning of the Tongmenghui programme that promoted the 'expulsion of the Tartar jailors to restore China' in the early years of the 20th century. This changed what should have been a 'democratic revolution' into a 'racial revolution' and deflected the orientation of the struggle in a way that reflected the weakness of the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and the

peasants. This type of logic taken to the extreme resulted in the 'farewell to revolution' approach of Li Zehou.

Is the late Qing ideological trend represented by 'revolution to expel the Manchus' a historical error? That is a spurious question and will be set aside temporarily, but it is clear that the Manchu rulers of the Qing did not abandon the 'twin-track' system.

To begin with the epilogue, the Revolution of 1911 was sparked by the lower ranks of the New Army at Wuchang and it is true that it proceeded from the foresight of national public figures. However, had it not been for the trouble-making of the gentry in the Sichuan Constitutional Party, the transfer by the Qing court of the Hubei Army under Duan Fang to suppress them, thus creating a vacuum in the defence of Wuhan, it is unlikely that the New Army that had remained to garrison Wuchang would have revolted. If, not long before her death, Cixi had not promised a 'provisional constitution', provoking the provincial gentry to compete with each other to create 'local self-government', it is unlikely that the Sichuan gentry would have had the nerve to confront the Viceroy. If, after Cixi's death, the Prince Regent had not organised a 'cabinet of the imperial family', with as it happened a dishonest constitutional trick, could the provincial constitutional factions have ended up on the opposite side to the Qing court? There are many more ifs but it is abundantly clear that the Manchu rulers would rather have died than abandon their hereditary privilege of 'Manchus control of the Han', even though the price they paid was the ultimate doom of Manchu rule.

People often ridicule historians as 'Zhu Geliang after the event' [Monday morning quarterbacks] but the genuine historian, who does not take into account high political pressure or financial inducements, and insists on using only history itself to explain history, will not lose contact with the true picture of history and try to pass himself of as a prophet or magician trying to fathom out the decrees of the authorities. If history is treated as divination it must fail ten times out of ten.

The New Authoritarians are full of praise for the 'age of prosperity' of the Kangxi and Qianlong reigns. This is a great pity as they omit the 13 years of the Yongzheng reign (1711–1735), which was precisely the turning point of the Manchu power mechanism.

Did the Yongzheng emperor assasinate his father and manipulate the succession so that he could accede to the throne? Historians have long debated this but it still cannot be determined for certain, but when he was on the throne Yongzheng did imprison his elder brother and have his younger brother killed. This can be interpreted as an attack on the closely related Manchu aristocracy as he also put Han officials who had not achieved office through examination

success in important positions. Seemingly this was putting an end to the strict demarcation line between Manchus and Han but extant contemporary public and private material indicates without question that what he was doing was whatever was necessary to strengthen his personal and authocratic rule as monarch.

In fact with the creation of the Grand Council he stripped the Grand Secretariat of its authority and continued to pay attention to the balance of Manchu and Han on this new body. By the time he died the vast majority of senior officials that had been appointed were Manchu bannermen so he clearly used the power structures to respect the ancestral system of 'Manchu inside and Han outside' as psychological tools to maintain his personal dictatorship.

On the eve of the 1898 Wuxu Reforms, Ronglu, Cixi's confidant warned her in person that Kang Youwei's views that 'the laws of the forefathers cannot be altered' showed how much he despised the Xuantong emperor. What Kang meant was the system of 'Manchu control over the Han' that had been strengthened by the Yongzheng emperor to strengthen his despotism.

Logically systems should change with time but as the final years of the Qing dynasty approached, changes of a fundamental nature occurred in the domestic and external circumstances of the Qing empire; in their minds the powerful people who controlled that empire were still using criteria formed by the words and deeds of their ancestors 160 years previously. Thus the Cixi clique choked the Hundred Days Reform and followed on by stirring up the Boxers to 'support the Qing and exterminate the foreigners', using chauvinist psychology to keep people in ignorance in the hope that they could stabilise their Manchu hereditary privileges. They played with fire and not surprisingly they were burned: Cixi followed in the footsteps of her late husband the Xianfeng emperor [technically she was concubine rather than wife], setting a new record for allowing the imperial capital to fall into the hands of foreign invaders.

The twin-track system had not died out. As Engels pointed out tradition is a form of intertia. Since it already had a history of close on 300 years it had already become an effective system for the centralisation of state power and it ended very quickly wth the fall from power of the Manchu Qing. Could it change its form? Could it transcend Qing history and enter a new transmigration in the samsara of birth, death and reincarnation? This is more of a problem for students of Republican history.

16 September 2008, at night.

ESSAY 14

Change and Interchange of Heaven and Man

In 1611 (Ming Wanli 44), the Manchu leader Nurhachi who was guarding the gateway to the northern frontiers for the Ming dynasty seized the opportunity when the decay of the Ming court had penetrated deep into the marrow and led the first rebellion against the Ming. He established a new state and sparked off a large-scale civil war that extended to the interior of China and turned into a major conflict between the Manchus and the Han that was to dominate the 17th century.

The conflict did not end with the Manchu occupation of Beijing. Like their predecessors the Jurchen, Mongols etc, the Manchus were desperate to establish special privileges for themselves as they conquered and occupied the land of the Central Plains. The Eight Banners established garrisons and the population were compelled to shave their heads leaving only a queue at the back and to wear a different style of clothing. The defeated Ming armies were used by the conquerors and anti-Ming bands or the remnants of the dying Ming dynasty were dealt with ruthlessly. When the Southern Ming resistance collapsed, following the precedent of the first two Ming emperors, the Qing 'cooked the dog once the rabbit had been killed', using the Han army to suppress the rebellion of the Three Feudatories and joined with the Dutch to wipe out the Zheng Chenggong regime. In 1683 (Kangxi 22) the attack on Taiwan unified China in the mediaeval sense.

The Kangxi emperor, Aisin Gioro Xuanye, the second generation emperor after the Qing controlled China was on the throne for 61 year from 1661 to 1722 and was accorded the temple name of Shengzu after his death. Kangxi, in the eyes of the generations that followed him, was thorough and had a clear vision of the loyalty that he expected. People were expected to behave loyally towards their clan, to the Manchus and to China, and this was expressed in complex and multilayered arguments.

In spite of having to counteract unalterable aspects of Manchu rule such as the regent Oboi who ruled during the emperor's minority, Kangxi began a magnificent reign, undertook northern and southern expeditions to establish his control of China and also stabilised the political situation in Xinjiang. This was marred by his concern at the internal strife between the Aisin Gioro clan and high officials of the Manchu banners. From his middle years onwards he faced problems with his 35 imperial sons who formed cliques to promote

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their own selfish interests, squabbled among themselves and cost the emperor much money.

Shizong whose reign name was Yongzheng was on the throne for only 13 years (1722–35) but he was the true creator of the Manchu Qing system of an autocratic monarchy. He had acquired the throne in an unorthodox way, by ensuring that he neutralised his brothers and then other relatives and possibly murdering his father. He concocted accusations against Longkodo and Nian Gengyao who had initially supported his seizure of power and had them put out of reach. When public opinion went against him because of the rumours that he had killed his father and and brothers, he did not withdraw from public life but took the opportunity of an alleged revolt by the governor of Sichuan to have a critic thrown into prison. During his reign he repeatedly launched literary inquisitions, of which the case of Qiao Mingshi is the best known.

Qiao had dedicated a poem to Nian Gengyao, in commemoration of his campaigns in Tibet and Qinghai and Yongzheng accused him of 'using poetry to flatter evildoers', ensuring that he lost his official position and was forced to return to his home county where he remained under surveillance. Yongzheng wrote out the words, 'offender against the Confucian code' and ordered that this be placed on a board and displayed outside his house. Officials sitting for the imperial examinations were ordered to attack Qiao and Yongzheng using literature as the law of the land and as a warning for people and officials. It was a case that terrified officials at the Manchu court.

Qiao Mingshi was from Zhejiang and had been the brilliant pupil of Wang Sitong, one of the key revisers of the *Ming History* that was written in the Qing dynasty. Yongzheng's complaints seems to have been that, in the offending poem, Qiao was alleged to have doubted that patriots had been sentenced to death.

Yongzheng consolidated the late Ming system of secret agents and encouraged senior officials in the provinces and at court to inform against each other. This created an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and officials feared that one word out of place would place them at the mercy of their political rivals. Lies, deceit and bullying were commonplace throughout the empire from top to bottom.

In the two hundred years from late Kangxi to the two reigns of Yongzheng and Qianlong, the Manchu empire had fewer civil wars than in contemporary Europe and had no power struggles that threatened to blow the empire apart. In comparison with the Han, Tang and Yuan dynasties, the political stability was unprecedented.

History takes its own path. In comparison with the turmoil of 18th century Europe, the Manchu empire can be considered stable, especially in the fields

of thought and culture. The *Siku quanshu*, compiled on the instructions of the Qianlong emperor can be thought of as the highest development of the plans of the first emperor of China, Qin Shi Huangdi, when he approved of Li Si's statement that, 'the art of ensuring peace and quiet is that there are no differences of opinion under heaven'.

Unfortunately, while the Qianlong emperor was praising himself for his almost perfect 'civil administration and military prowess', heretical ideas already latent in the general population, in what is generally termed the White Lotus Rebellion, had spread throughout what today are the provinces of Sichuan, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Anhui and Hubei. The threat was widely recognised throughout the country although the emperor, then in his eighties, remained in befuddled ignorance.

The Qianlong emperor had ascended the throne in the eighth month of 1735 (Yongzheng 13) at the age of 25 *sui*. He had not encountered the conflict among crown princes that had accompanied the succession of his father and grandfather and this may have allowed him to be complacent as he grew older. During the middle years of his reign he vowed never to establish an empress or secretly nominate an heir. When he was 85 *sui*, conscious that he was coming to the end of his allotted time and fearful of his fate, he turned to meditation and contemplation in the Ch'an Buddhist tradition to try to cheat the gods and the spirits. In his haste he then designated his fifteenth son, Yongyan [the future Jiaqing emperor, who was of mixed Manchu and Han blood], as his successor. He began to refer to himself as *Taishanghuang*, [which translates roughly as 'emperor emeritus] and formally abdicated in favour of the Jiaqing emperor, who ruled in name only until Qianlong died in 1799.

Jiaqing then carried out a palace coup, rounding up in one fell swoop Heshen, the Qianlong emperor's favourite minister, General Fu Kang'an and other members of his faction. However the emperor was manifestly terrified by his own actions and was bemused at the amount of wealth and supporters left behind by Heshen. He forced Heshen to commit suicide and then issued an edict that 'all should take part in reform'. Could he have reformed the old system and implemented a new administration? In 1799, the year that Jiaqing began to rule in person, a critical essay written by a second-class compiler of the Hanlin Academy, Hong Liangji, was submitted as a memorial denouncing the ideological system of the previous reign. Jiaqing was greatly angered, accused him of using criticisms of the past to attack the current administration and had him committed to prison with the possibility of a death sentence hanging over him. Fearing that public opinion would be against him if this were carried out the emperor had Hong banished to Xinjiang. This case is the first evidence that the 'reform' edict was not what it seemed. The second set

of evidence comes from edicts issued repeatedly by Jiaqing and his successor emperors, requesting plain speaking and responses to edicts without reservation, but really only wanting a fawning response that coincided with their current thinking. The third piece of evidence is that the Qing court would not tolerate officials speaking out of turn or being insubordinate, even if they were of high rank. To speak of the great matters of state, even if it was within their remit, was automatically considered to be speaking out of turn. Hong Liangji had offended by what he had written and it was essential to intimidate the Han gentry, although they had been silent for over half a century.

From the Shunzhi to the Jiaqing reign whenever natural or man-made disasters occurred, the emperor would issue an edict alleging that there had been criminality. Even the Qianlong emperor who was less inclined to level criticisms as he grew older feared 'the wrath of heaven'. In the first month of 1795 (Qianlong 60) solar and lunar eclipses made him examine his moral character even more closely and worry that he had violated the oath to heaven and earth and his ancestors that he had taken when he had ascended the throne 60 years previously. The oath had included requests to the gods that they protect the emperor and grant him long life and intelligence. In particular he regarded the lunar eclipse that took place on the 15th day of the first month in the traditional calendar as a warning from heaven. This may seem laughable to modern people, but who can avoid natural disasters, including solar flares, earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, floods and droughts? The need for humility and an acknowledgment of the threat of climate change are a modern parallel. However perhaps it is better to take into account Wang Anshi's delcaration one thousand years ago that there are three things not worth worrying about: changes in the weather; copying ancestors; and sympathising with criticisms of other people.

24 May 2008, at night.

ESSAY 15

Looking Back at the Reign of the Yongzheng Emperor from the Qianlong Period

The Qianlong reign lasted for 63 years from the succession to the throne in 1735 of Aisin Gioro Hongli to his self-appointment as *Taishanghuang* and his death three years later. This set the record for autocratic dictatorships in mediaeval China and probably only Louis XIV on the throne of France ruled for longer.

The dictatorial powers enjoyed by Qianlong in the 18th century were not at the same level as those in contemporary European monarchies. In the recent [1997] edition of the *Siku quanshu* there are over 1500 primary sources that provide evidence of the comprehensive dictatorship over ideological and cultural matters in the middle and late Qianlong period. By this standard the autocracies of a Holy Roman Emperor or a Tsar of Russia were milder. In China, as early as the eve of the Christian or Common Era, the emperors of the Western Han moved to collect and regulate the store of books in the court and the power to control and reedit was developed by all subsequent dynasties.

Emperors may have esteemed learning but they also used any opportunity to restrain scholars or literati who were unwilling to cooperate with the authorities. Successful cases in point include the compilation of the *Orthodox Interpretation of the Five Classics* by order of the Tang Emperor, Taizong, and the revision of the *History of the Five Dynasties* and the *Book of Jin* in the same period. Two of the Song emperors, the brothers Taizu and Taizong, ordered the compilation of encyclopaedias for the same reason as did the Ming emperors.

Thirty years before the Manchus entered and occupied Beijing, their homeland, Manchuria, was a tribal military confederation of Manchu, Mongols and Han on the northern frontiers of Ming dynasty China. At its core were the powerful officials of the Eight Banners. Following Nurhachi's revolt against the Ming the Manchu language was standardised on the basis of the Mongol script and even before 1644 the Chinese classics had been translated into Manchu. Once Beijing had been captured, the regent, Dorgon, ratified the official translations of the classics and even the Manchu version of the popular Ming novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, which reinforced the Manchus' eccentric worship of General Guanyu of the Shu Han state. Guanyu became one of the gods worshipped in Manchu shamanism, with a status higher than that of Confucius for the rest of the dynasty. Up to the last years of the Daoguang reign the Qing

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rulers had established temples to Confucius throught the country. 'Middle Sacrifices' at these temples were made with offerings of pigs and sheep but the 'Great Sacrifice' included larger animals, mainly oxen. My own *Coming Out of the Middle Ages* published in 1987 included a section on the strange phenomenon of the Manchus' worship of Guanyu.

For the last hundred years of modern history writers have emphasised that the 'Qing followed the Ming' but following Qian Daxin's demand that the standards of narrative history should be protected and cherished, it is necessary to point out that from the Shunzhi reign onwards the traditional policy of 'using barbarians to control barbarians' had already been altered to 'using the Ming to control the Ming'. When the Shunzhi emperor begn to rule in his own right he immediately had Dorgon, his 'adopted father' attacked as a traitor, but after ten years contracted smallpox and died. He issued an edict recognising that he had been guilty of violating the Manchu tradition in fourteen ways but there is no way of knowing whether this was genuinely the view of the Shunzhi emperor in his final days. Just as in the case of 'with you in charge, I am at ease' it is possible that conversation and writing were pasted together but the authenticity is in dispute.

However once Oboi and other powerful officials of the court had power in their hands they tried to reverse the historical trend since Manchus conqured the whole of China. Manchu bannerman were locked in internal strife and many of the Han gentry who had capitulated to the Qing felt remorse at their disloyalty. The young Kangxi emperor fomented a palace coup, detained Oboi and seized power back for the aristocracy, restraining a retrogression by Manchus to a conflict between tribal chiefs. Military democracy was superficially negated but the process undoubtedly led to monarchical autocracy. In three generations—the reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong—the course of Chinese civilisation was set to be a cultural dictatorship controlled by the emperor.

Although the Qing Shunzhi emperor did not have a long life, his successor Kangxi did, ascending the throne at the age of 8 *sui* and dying at the age of 69 *sui* which gave him sixty years on the throne breaking the Chinese record from the Qin, Han, Tang and Song emperors. On the death of Yongzheng, Qianlong acceded to the throne at which time he was already 25 *sui*. His grandfather Kangxi in his later years had already determined the principle of the separation of politics and religion since politics necessitated a unified domain and it was necessary to ensure that religious convictions did not hinder the various ethnic groups going their own way. Therefore the Kangxi Emperor venerated Confucius but did not allow great Han officials to take part in the Manchus' shamanistic ceremonies in their sacrificial halls or allow Han officials to be

concerned with Mongol and Tibetan Lama Buddhist and other traditional beliefs. At the same time, as far as Muslims of various ethnic groups in the northwest and the followers of diverse religions in the southwest were concerned, he just decreed that they should all obey the political unity of the empire and respected the freedom to observe religious beliefs and the cultural customs of different traditions.

The Kangxi Emperor's successor, Yinzhen, Qing Shizong, who took the reign name Yongzheng, was not at all the crown prince designated by his father before his death. Did he collude with 'Uncle Longkodo' to tamper with Kangxi's deathbed injunctions to set in motion a palace coup and seize the throne which rightfully belonged to his half-brother the fourteenth prince Yinti? Since the early years of the Republic, scholars including Meng Sen, Wang Zhonghan and Yang Zhen have demonstrated convincingly as far as I am concerned that this did happen notwithstanding repeated counterarguments from those who replace history with logic. Up to now this is still a great mystery of the Manchu Qing palace chambers.

Whether or not Yongzheng did really seize the throne from his brother and whether he came into the inheritance of the empire legally or not, there are some points that are not in doubt. The third monarch of this empire dragged back to stability by force the political system that had fallen into turmoil because of the strife between princes of Kangxi's last years. Did he commit the great crime of killing his father and oppressing his mother? No-one can say for certain. However through the case of Zeng Jing [1679–1736, a teacher who was eventually executed for having defamed the Yongzheng Emperor], the emperor, acting in place of the supreme court and simultaneously acting as apologist and accused published his apologia *Record of Resolving Delusion* [*Dayi juemi lu*] to put his own case that he did not. However it is clear that he harmed his brothers and carried out other treacherous and vicious actions. Furthermore his successful career of butchering those who had given meritorious service may even excel that of Ming Taizu (Zhu Yuanzhang). Zhu Yuanzhang murdered upstanding officials in order to stabilise control over the whole kingdom for his descendants. Unexpectedly, after his death, internal conflict within the ruling house led to revolt and usurpation and it was the fourth son Zhu Di, who had been campaigning with his troops against the Mongols on the borders, Prince Yan, who eventually succeeded and ruled as the Yongle Emperor. And it was also an emperor's fourth son, the Manchu prince Yong, who in the later years of the reign of the Kangxi emperor seemed to be honest and only carried out tasks of ceremonial and religious nature that had been approved by his father the emperor. In the rivalry between the imperial princes for precedence he maintained a position in the middle but had the support internally of the commander of the Imperial Bodyguard, Longkodo [of the Manchu Bordered

Yellow Banner who also had control of the Beijing Gendarmerie], and externally had established control over crack troops of the Manchu Eight Banners General Nian Gengyao [1679–1726, of the Chinese Bordered Yellow Banner which served Yongzheng when he was a prince]. Therefore the sudden demise of the Kangxi Emperor and the promulgation of his decision about a successor stupefied the entire court. It was as if he had absorbed the historical lessons of the 'Jinchuan Gate Rebellion' [named after the gate through which the future Yongle emperor entered Nanjing] after the death of Ming Taizu, firstly having brothers and other members of his own family executed and then assasinating officials who had loyally served the previous emperor, the outcome being a despotic and autocratic system more successful by a long way than Ming Taizu's usurpation of the throne.

Yongzheng had been emperor for only thirteen years when he was pushed to his highest achievement by the late mediaeval autocratic monarchy. Of course the price that he paid was a high one. Compared with the secretive system of communications that he inherited from Kangxi, not only did the key political and military officials of the entire nation have secret agents placed by their side, in addition he constructed a mechanism for officials from the centre to the regions to inform against each other. The effect of this was that the cabinet and ministries of the court and the great officials of the provinces and the frontier regions were all a threat to each other. In Yongzheng extant confidential communications, there are over 160,000 documents read and commented on, some 340 per day. They dealt with military matters [later the work of the Grand Council], sacrificial offerings to court, dealing with the wives and concubines and many other subjects which was pretty arduous.

Yongzheng was 58 years old when he died which cannot be reckoned as dying young but among the ordinary people during the Qing period it was widely rumoured that he had been stabbed by Lǘ Siniang, a female slave in the royal household. Tradition has it that Lǘ Siniang was the daughter of Lǘ Liuliang [1629–83] whose coffin had been torn open and his corpse beheaded as a result [of enquiries into his anti-Manchu writings] during the production of *Record of Resolving Delusion*, the greatest literary inquisition unleashed by Yongzheng. This story may be a fantasy but, like similar 'blood-dripping' stories, it spread widely through the populace; even I first heard about Yongzheng as a child from a 'blood-dripping' story teller in a tea house in the small town where my family lived south of the Yangzi River. Unfortunately after reading many histories of Chinese fiction I found none that had such a response to Yongzheng Emperor's cultural dictatorship policies.

Up until today what I do not understand is the historical information published by the 'State Commission on Compilation of Qing history' in recent years, confirming that the Qing Dynasty had a 'flourishing period' but invariably

naming it this as the 'Kangxi Qianlong flourishing period'. How can the thirteen years of the rule of Yongzheng, the son of Kangxi and the father of Qianlong be omitted from this 'flourishing period'? Can it be that of the strict but impartial policies of Qing Shizong that there is now only a negative view whereas official historians from the Qing to the Republic have all been so positive about the reign? Did the Qianlong Emperor really 'poison' his father, negate his father's policies on political, economic, civil and military matters and also follow his father's policy of ruling by clemency? I look forward to an explanation from the 'State Commission on Compilation of Qing history' but I very much regret that however many years I have thought about this I still do not know today the reason for the exclusion of Yongzheng from the 'Kangxi Qianlong flourishing period', but this is perhaps an embarrassing topic.

According to Confucius, 'At the age of seventy I can follow my heart's desire without going against my moral compass'. All my life I have scrupulously abided by the 'moral compass' of Marxist materialism and today I have already lived longer than the limitations on age specified in Confucius's comment on the Duke of Zhou. The future is bitter and short so I speak a little of what I have learned about not transgressing the moral compass in studying history and of course look forward to brilliant advice.

30 March 2010.

ESSAY 16

Fake Draft Memorial in the Name of Sun Jiagan

Explanatory Preface

The literary inquisitions of the Qing dynasty reign of Qianlong can be numbered at over one hundred and the precursor was the case of the 'Fake draft memorial in the name of Sun Jiagan' which ran between the 8th month of 1751 and the 4th month of 1753. The investigation of this case was personally supervised by Qianlong, affected eighteen provinces and implicated countless scholars and others. Dozens of high and medium ranking local officials, both civil and military were named and reprimanded by the emperor and lost rank. The details of the entire case are bewildering. Qianlong's psychology and his impatience to solve the case are difficult to understand. There are few materials relating to this case and specialist research lacks breadth and depth. This essay concentrates on examining the imperial edicts and vermillion rescripts [*zhupi*] of Qianlong which relate to this case and it may perhaps contribute to the understanding of the true face of the ruling culture of the 'golden age' [*shengshi*] of the Qing.

1

After the Manchu Qing dynasty occupied Beijing [in 1644] it passed through nine generations of emperor and there were literary inquisitions from the beginning of the reign of the first emperor, Shunzhi, to the end of the last, Guangxi, were a special characteristic of the last phase of imperial China's autocratic monarchy.

Meng Sen's *Materials on Qing History* (*Qingshi jiangyi*) on the flourishing {*quansheng*} of the Qing dynasty criticised the two reigns of Yongzheng and Qianlong and gives a picture of Qing history that conforms relatively well with the reality. But Meng Sen's criticism of literary inquisitions between these two reigns although admirably meticulous, unavoidably leads to the conclusion that the Qianlong reign was influenced by Yongzheng.

In fact the emperor with the reign title of Qianlong, Qing Gaozong, including his period in retirement [1796–99] after his abdication exercised autocratic power for almost 64 years—fifty years more than the Yongzheng emperor Qing Shizong who was on the throne for thirteen years. As to the literary inquisitions of the two reigns, since the Republican period there has been some difference

of opinion on the statistics. According to the enumerations of specialists on both sides of the Taiwan Straits in the last thirty years, in the Yongzheng reign there were perhaps between eight and twelve instances of literary inquisition, whereas in the Qianlong period the numbers were between 88 and 142. For the rationale behind this research, see Ye Gaoshu *Qingchao qianqi de wenhua zhengce* [*Cultural Policies of the Early Qing Period*] Taipei: Daoxian Press, 2002, pp. 252–3. The number of cases under Qianlong is more than 7 to 10 times more than that of the Yongzheng reign.

Taking a broad view of the 18th century world, in the Great Qing Empire under Qianlong can be compared with the states of Europe that were in a state of mutual conflict. The population was numerous and flourishing, the economy prospered, and society was stable with an effective central administration that can be described as second to none. Precisely because of this, Qianlong's pursuit of civil administration seems correct and how could it have been known that it was not the result of its being rich and populous but on the contrary the continuous cultural terror which stifled the expression of opinions, publications and even thoughts that manifested any form of heterodoxy. This was sure to bring about everyone's respect for the sovereign and the aristocracy on pain of severe punishment. Its effect? If we compare it with Europe at the same time, the various European states all fell into a state of internal wars, apart from Tsarist Russia, the old order was collapsing and there appeared a succession of philosophers, scientists and political thinkers who thought and acted for the future. But in the Qing Empire the most outstanding scholars were all obliged to bury themselves in musty old books while mediocrities one after another strove to establish themselves in public service by means of the rigid and stereotyped 'eight legged essays'. Holding a high position in the imperial court, apart from the descendents of the eight Manchu banners, meant seizing the opportunity to worm one's way into the palace and grab a position.

Did Qianlong realise that his court was flooded with mediocrities and sycophants? Not only did he realise it, for fear of ministers and powerful officials outside the court and mediocre people or sycophants lacking skill in deceit, he took precautions against powerful officials using connections through female relatives gaining trust and able to trick the emperor and exceed their authority.

The Manchu Qing court was filled with bitter secrets. There are questions and doubts about the birth and death of almost every emperor and especially the way that they acceded to the throne.

After the sudden death of Yongzheng, Qianlong came to the throne at the age of 25 *sui*. According to the official historical records of the Qing court, in the first year of the Yongzheng reign (1723) the decision was made secretly to name an heir to the throne; the fourth son of the emperor was named as successor and therefore there were no doubts as to the legality of his succession to the throne.

Unfortunately the Qing historical records, such as the *Shilu* which chronicle the successive reigns were compiled by official historians appointed by this successor and moreover were later continuously edited. Obvious examples such as the two parts of *Donghualu* (*Records from within the Eastern Gate*) by Jiang Liangqi and Wang Xianqian [Wang published a sequel in 1884 dealing with records from 1735 where Jiang's book had stopped] similarly, in accordance with the *Shilu* that they had seen, set out the annalistic history of the three reigns of Shunzhi, Kangxi and Yongzheng, but in copying and summarising the historical materials, in each of the successive dynasties there are many discrepancies. Using unofficial *biji* writings from the same period, historians mostly consider that the historical picture in the Jiang records—according to early Qianlong records of the three reigns—is more reliable than the Wang records compiled in the Guangxu reign. It is known that the existing *Qing Shilu* after successive alterations and revisions moved further and further from the true picture and compared with the *Ming Shilu* that has been handed down appears to be more a case of 'unveritable veritable records' [*shilu bu shi*].

The fake Sun Jiagan draft memorial is a classic example of this.

2

This case first appears in the *Donghua xulu Records of the Eastern Gate—Supplement* [1909] in an imperial edict dated the 5th day of the 8th month of the 16th year of the Qianlong reign (1751) which relates that, according to a memorial to the throne from the Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou, Shuose, private copies of a secret report made by travelling merchants going to Yunnan had been discovered in Anshun Prefecture in Guizhou Province.

> Reading the statements disseminated in the secret report, it is actually a simulated designation of a court official, but greatly mocked even to the point of fabricating a Vermillion Rescript, with countless wild fabulous and invented stories, appearing to be most unfilial and rebellious, flaunting arrogance and presumption, unlawfully and in the extreme.

Thereupon the Emperor issued an order to the officials of the Grand Council,

> Issue instructions to the Commandant of Gendarmerie in Beijing Shuhede, the Governor-General of Zhili Fang Guancheng, Govenor of Henan Zhun Tai, Shanxi Governor Asihe, Hubei Governor Heng Wen, Hunan Governor Yang Xifu and Guizhou Governor Kai Tai, to order them to appoint officers worthy of confidence, for secret arrest and investigation. If there are any clues, arrests should be made immediately and requests made for instructions from the emperor. Those involved must not avoid punishment. It is essential that this is carried out with utmost secrecy and there must be no leaks.

The *Donghua xulu* records for the 27th of the same month another edict referring to writers of simulated confidential reports including one by Sun Jiagan from Xing county in Shanxi who had one year previously been in the Board of Works and was supervisor of Hanlin Academy scholars. On the basis of reports from the Shandong judicial commissioner, Qianlong had learned that in the fourth month of that year, 'fake Sun Jiagan memorials had been discovered in that province. Governor Zhun Tai had covered this up and did not send a memorial to the emperor which he found intolerable'. Zhun Tai was stripped of his post, arrested and examined.

But this was only the beginning of Qianlong's eruption of fury. Merely looking at the *Donghua xulu*, this case lasted from the 8th month of Qianlong 16 until its temporary close in the 3rd month of Qianlong 18. During this period of twenty months, dozens of provincial civil and military officials, at all levels of the local administration and judiciary, and across the fifteen provinces of the interior were dismissed, imprisoned, retired or censured. With the situation as serious as this, what was the content of the so-called false Sun Jiagan draft memorials? Why did this provoke the wrath of the emperor? How could that class of unfortunate important provincial and military officials have aroused the detestation of the emperor? The edicts, memorials and deliberations in the *Veritable Records of Gaozong* [the reign of Qianlong] copied and summarised by Wang Xianqian are unclear and ambiguous.

Up to the 4th day of the 3rd month of Qianlong 18, as recorded in the *Donghua xulu* 'Grand Council Board of Punishments memorial', the case was being wound up according to the imperial edict. It was revealed that the writer of the false memorial had used Sun Jiagan's name in the hope that this would give credibility to his allegations of serious wrongdoings. Needless to say, 'serious wrongdoings' is certainly directed against doubts and suspicion and crimes in the fifteen years since the accession to the throne of the Qianlong

Emperor, otherwise the emperor would not have been so nervous not to mention furious. Nevertheless it attracted the interest of commercial classes and the gentry, to such an extent that within a year copies may have been transmitted throughout the fifteen provinces. Even civil officials and military officers in many places also believed its contents to be true, and copied and circulated it among fellow officials, relatives and friends.

It is very strange that from the end of the Qing dynasty to the early Republican period, the 'net of heaven' [*tianwang*] had long since been damaged so that it leaked, but even the unofficial historical notes or jottings [*biji*] that revelled in the scandals of the Manchu Qing court paid very little attention to this case of a 'literary inquisition' in the early period of Qianlong's rule. For example the early Republican period Qing dynasty collection of historical materials, the *Unofficial History of the Qing Dynasty* [*Qingchao yeshi daguan*] only has one section relating to the 'fake memorial case' and what is more this is copied in part from the *Donghua xulu*. A little later, in the sixty four sections of the *Archives of the Qing Literary Inquisition* [*Qingdai wenziyu dang*], compiled by the Palace Museum Archives in what was then Beiping, that deal with the Qianlong literary inquisition, there is no mention of the case of the Sun Jiagan fake memorials. This inevitably leads to the suspicion that the material on these cases had disappeared from the archives of the Qing court.

Some years ago I came across the article, 'Selection of Archival Materials on the Case of the Fake Memorials of Sun Jiagan', published in the journal *Historical Archives* [*Lishi dang'an*], and a little later found *Archives on the Qing Literary Inquisition* [*Qingdai wenziyu dang*] reprinted by Shanghai Booksellers. By including supplementary material on the five cases from China's National No. 1 Archives, and then adding relevant published material from the *Veritable Records of the Gaozong Period*, I began to get to know the remnants of the primary sources for this case, two hundred and ninety-two items. The fake documents on the Sun Jiagan memorials that were copied and circulated have not been discovered to date, so it is possible that in those years they were consigned to the flames by the emperor and the ministers of the Qianlong court. However on the basis of the almost three hundred documents on the 'fake Sun Jiagan memorial case' published by Shanghai Booksellers Press, it is still possible to debate, even if somewhat indistinctly, the whole course of this case.

3

The fake Sun Jiagan draft memorials attacked the 'contemporary sage' using Sun Jiagan's name as a leading Hanlin Academy scholar in the Qing court. Ming Taizu had only ever allowed the term 'sage' to be used for the emperor and in the five hundred years during which the Ming had followed the Qing pattern,

right up to the beginning of the Qing reign of Guangxu, this rule had only been broken when the Empress Dowager Cixi usurped the throne.

Sun Jiagan, who had been advanced to the status of *jinshi* in the latter part of the Kangxi reign period, became well-known in the early years of the Yongzheng reign. At that time Yongzheng was beginning to find his feet [after a disputed succession] and he permitted Sun, a Hanlin Academy Reviser and low-ranking 7th Grade official, to submit a memorial appealing for the emperor to 'be more considerate of his close relatives' and was denounced by the emperor as a 'conceited and overbearing scholar'. Several years later Yongzheng had him arrested for impoliteness in the imperial presence and he was sentenced to be beheaded but because he was judged to have been stupid and was not over fond of money he was allowed to keep his head. He held a number of central and provincial posts and was ordered to investigate allegations against the censor, Xie Jishi, in a literary inquisition. Both Xie and Sun were dismissed and Sun was sent to oversee repairs to the city wall of Hubei When Qianlong ascended the throne, affected by the 'insanity of his father', he commanded Sun to assume the Senior Vice Presidency of the Censorate. When the 'fake memorial' in his name surfaced he became ill with worry and died in 1753 as the memorial was finally accepted as bogus by the emperor.

ESSAY 17

Literary Inquisition after the Death of Mao Qiling

The Intimidation of Mao Qiling in the Southern Mountain Collection (*Nanshan Ji*) Case

Mao Qiling can be considered a cultural sacred monster [*guaijie*] of the early Qing period. He was born in the third year of the Tianqi reign of the Ming dynasty (1623) in Xiaoshan in Zhejiang Province [in what is now a district of the city of Hangzhou]. At the age of only fifteen, not even the legal age of majority in the Ming dynasty, he passed the examinations under the direction of the Provincial Literary Chancellor to qualify as a licentiate [*xiucai*]. His fame spread throughout the province as well as his own county and he and his eldest brother Mao Wanling who was 29 sui were known as the 'Great and Small Mao scholars'.

In the second year of the Qing dynasty reign of Shunzhi (1645), when the Manchus sent their armies southwards, he participated in the resistance by the regime of Prince Lu of the Southern Ming. However he discovered that neither the regimes of Prince Lu nor Prince Fu had any chance of success, so he shaved his head and became a monk. Afterwards he resumed the secular life but was persecuted by local officials and gentry who had surrendered to both Li Zicheng and the Manchus. He changed his name to Qian Tao [Hidden Fugitive] and throughout the reigns of Shunzhi and Kangxi, he wandered through the provinces of Jiangsu, Anhui, Shandong, Henan and Jiangxi. For almost twenty years he drifted and finally settled in Shanghai where he was recommended to take the special *boxue hongci* examinations that were introduced by the Kangxi Emperor to encourage former Ming loyalist Han Chinese officials to join the Qing administration: the examinations that Mao took were administered jointly by the Zhejiang and Fujian provinces.

His luck eventually turned and in the ninth month of the 17th year of the Qing dynasty Kangxi reign (1678) he arrived in Beijing. That year he was 56 *sui*, and in the preceding period of exile his fame had spread far and wide so the great Han officials of the Qing court competed to receive him courteously. The Grand Secretary, Li Wei, and Third Secretary Feng Pu (1609–1692) of the Grand Secretariat both viewed him favourably as did others in the Grand Secretariat.

On the first day of the 3rd month of the 18th year of the Qing reign of Kangxi, he took part in the imperial examination set by the Kangxi Emperor. Of the 153 initially selected he was named among the top 50 *boxue hong*

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special examination scholars, and on the final list of names for the emperor's approval he emerged as number 19 in the second grade. On the list circled by the emperor to indicate his approval he was actually placed at number 39; on the list there were 20 names in the first class and 30 in the second so he was number 39 in the overall listing. He was examined by the Hanlin Academy and then appointed as a 7th grade Hanlin Academy official, the lowest grade of junior official. Naturally he was extremely disappointed, but took the view that to have got into the Hanlin Academy put him at the centre of imperial power. Therefore in seven years at the Hanlin Academy even though he only had one opportunity to act as associate examiner for the Metropolitan Examinations, he was unwilling to leave his post.

He seems to have felt that time and tide wait for no man—but it also seemed as if he came to realise that the political trickery of the Kangxi emperor was terrifying. As Deng Zhicheng has said, the Kangxi emperor's attitude to the special *boxue hongru* scholars was 'initially afraid that he would not be able to recruit them but then afraid that he would not be able to get rid of them' [Book 2 of *Records of Qing Poetry* (*Qing shi jishi*) Volume 1]. In my opinion there is another reason: the group of Han officials who can be said to be of mainstream origin, looked askance at the candidates with wide scholarship, scholars who had suddenly risen from the common herd, and ridiculed them as 'rustic Hanlin', derided them as phoney barbarians and caused the Kangxi emperor, who was conscious of his reputation, to feel the pressure of popular opinion. After the suppression of the Three Feudatories revolt, the scholar gentry of the south were not selected, apart from those who had lived on the land of the Qing dynasty and eaten what it produced. Therefore the Kangxi Emperor began to tighten the cultural net, repeatedly warning the officials of the Hanlin Academy to pay attention to writings on moral conduct and good behaviour, 'to put an end to all communications on ceremonies' (see *Veritable Records of Shengzu*, 2nd month of Kangxi 23). There was criticism of the way that the new scholars frequently gathered in the Hanlin Academy for lavish poetry and wine parties. The *hongru* scholars from the south therefore followed hard on their heels to demand that they be allowed to attend and the Kangxi Emperor had no option but to grant their request.

Mao Qiling used his discretion. In Kangxi 24 (1685) when he was 62 years old, he 'requested urgently to return to the south', the pressing reason being that he had to move the graves of his parents, but in addition to this filial act he requested additional leave on the grounds that he was ill. He did not retire from official life and, with his status as a registered Hanlin academician, continued to be active in Zhejiang and Fujian official circles, at the same time when there were major issues at court such as the death of the Emperor's grandmother or the Emperor's southern tour, he found some legitimate way of taking part.

Thus he managed to maintain the emperor's favour, even in 1703 when he was 81 year of age in Hangzhou he acquired Kangxi's imperial autograph for which he was grateful to the end of his life.

He was good at exploiting opportunities such as this to 'play mah-jong with the emperor' and after settling in his village he assiduously engaged in writing and compilation such that in his later years his reputation continued to spread. Contemporaries mentioned his name together with that of Huang Zongxi [1610–1695, one of the foremost scholars of the early Qing period], saying that 'Nan Lei (Southern Thunder) and Xi He (West River) [the 'styles' of Huang and Mao] collected and edited the whole world' [Zhang Dalai *Hou jia ji*].

Mao Qiling left office and retired to the countryside but it is difficult to say in which year he passed away. According to the second volume of *History of the Qing*: Biographies [*Qingshi liezhuan*], 'in Kangxi 52, he died at home aged 91'. In the Wang Zhonghan edition published by Zhonghua Press in 1987 this is altered to 94, based on Jiang Liangfu's *Paizhuang zongbiao* (p. 81) but Wang is incorrect as there is no doubt that Mao Qiling was born in 1623 (3rd year of Ming Tianqi reign) and in 1713 (Kangxi 52) he would have been 91 years old. In fact Xiao Yishan's *Compilation of the Qing Dynasty Scholars* (*Qingdai xuezhe zhushu biao*) published by the Commercial Press in 1936 cites the date of his death as either Kangxi 52 or 55, that is 1713 or 1715. In addition *Records of the Years of Suspicion* (*Yinian luhuibian*) and other works, deny that he was 91 as the Qing biographies have it but fix his date of death as 1716 (Kangxi 55) which from Ming Tianqi 3 would make him 94. The Wang Zhonghan edition of the Qing history biographies mentions that he lived to an old age, but does not give the year of his death.

However Xiao Yishan's annotations based on critical reading of *Collection of Records of Uncertain Years* [*Yinian lu huibian*] are similarly questionable, even though he can call on support from relevant expositions of famous scholars from Ruan Yuan of the Qing dynasty to the Republican period writer Wang Guowei. There is also Hu Chunli's Fudan University doctoral thesis on Mao Qiling and early Qing studies of the Four Books [*Mao Qiling yu Qingchu Sishu xue*]; the second part on the life of Mao Qiling has already been published in Qinghua University's Centre for the Study of Confucian Classics volume, *Chinese Classics*. The explanation in *Qing History Biographies* [*Qingshi liezhuan*] is given according to Qian Daxin's *Record of Uncertain Years* [*Yinian lu*] and Qian states it may be from an account of Mao Qiling's later years set out by a disciple of Mao, Jiang Shu. Zhang Dalai's score-settling preface to [*Hou jiaji*] and Xiao Yishan's *Mao Qiling Genealogy* [*Xiao Yishan Maoshi zongpu*] gives direct confirmation.

In any case the discussion of the final years of Mao Qiling has not finished. Kangxi's southern progression made benevolent references to him three times,

ordering that he cheerfully become absentminded, which indicated an intimate understanding of close friend. When he was 86 years old still, and in spite of being weak and ill, he completed the final manuscript of *Errors Corrected in the Four Books* [*Sishu gai cuo*], and prepared to submit it in person to Kangxi, he was looking forward eagerly to the emperor pronouncing judgement on whether *Four Books: Interlinear Analyses and Collected Commentaries* [*Sishu zhangju jizhu*], his major contribution to Neo-Confucian thought of Zhu Xi (1130–1200) could be considered as an original Confucius-Mencius classic. He did not foresee that Kangxi would pay more attention to *Lixue zhenwei* and *Chongzhengxue* as false and *Chuyi duan* as genuine. In a very short time he discovered that Dai Mingshi who was close to him, had taken second place in the list of the palace examination. Dai was a Hanlin Academy reviser, who wrote *Nanshan ji*, which called into question the historical legitimacy of Kangxi's personal attacks in the war against the Southern Ming so he was immediately severely punished and this implicated such well-known exponents of rationalist Confucianism or Neo Confucianism as the Fang family of Tongcheng. This literary inquisition shook the entire country, initially shattering Mao Qiling's dream of becoming the imperial tutor. However he did not expect that at the same time as Kangxi was using the pretext of the Dai Mingshi case to 'kill the chicken to frighten the monkey' he would use high sounding words to respect Zhu Xi and raise him into the main hall of the Confucian temple, shoulder to shoulder with the ten philosophers of the Confucian school. This was the equivalent of proclaiming that Zhu Xi's principles were the only true Confucian orthodoxy handed down from the master. This frightened Mao Qiling and left him greatly agitated and he hastily took an axe to the cut blocks for his own *Sishu gaicuo* and cut them to pieces. This was in the 51st year of the reign of the Kangxi emperor and he was 90 years old.

The following year, just after the first month of the lunar year Kangxi ordered the immediate execution by beheading of Dai Mingshi. Did Mao Qiling hear of this? That cannot be said for certain, but it is known that he died at the beginning of the third lunar month of that year and his final wishes were that the arrangements for his funeral should be modest but he asked that he be buried in court dress as a mark of respect to his sovereign. If he still harboured feelings of grief or regret in retirement it is not apparent.

Mao Qiling 'Criticised' by Qianlong Emperor

In 1782 (the 47th year of Qianlong) the encyclopaedic *Imperial Manuscript Library of the Four Treasuries* [*Qinding siku quanshu*] was completed, and the

clean copy of the first section followed by the catalogue (*zongmu*) and the simplified catalogue were also submitted for imperial approval. In the second month of that year the Qianlong Emperor had awarded an imperial banquet to the entire body of officials in honour of their success, and rewarded Ji Yun (one of the chief editors) and other editorial staff. However he did not relax the ban on prohibited publications and punished those officials who were alleged to be in error, making it clear that he was going to continue tightening the literary net.

Sure enough at the end of the tenth month of that year the Grand Secretariat promulgated a new edict:

> The Office of the Four Treasuries has submitted for imperial approval a book of selections of annotated poetry by the former Hanlin Academy Examining Editor [*jiantao*] Mao Qiling. In this book there are the written characters '*Qing shi xia Zhe*' [the Qing master went down to Zhejiang] which is a serious falsehood. Mao Qiling was a Kangxi period Hanlin Academician who in his writings recorded the current events of our dynasty and should be called 'common soldier' [*dabing*] or 'imperial tutor' [*wang shi*] or such terms. Referring to him as the Qing tutor [*Qing shi*] raising him up in writing is a serious error. Mao Qiling was a person of literary renown who lived to a great age. I am not willing to treat his case in the same way as the previous cases of Dai Mingshi and others, because of his errors in his expressions. But I have read these writings, editings and compilations and they should be submitted according to the usual arrangements for editing and correction to the Hanlin office . . . Apart from handing over original documents to the office for correction, it should be ascertained whether there are other similar mistakes that should be corrected. Names in these texts, including those of Ji Yun, Lu Xixiong (the other chief editor), and the general editor Lu Feichi, Wang Yanzhu, branch official Li Yuanbo can be handed over for discussion to the appropriate sections. As for transcribing ungrammatical and incoherent records, they are to be written out correctly to avoid investigation and appropriate action. Communication should also be sent to the governors-general and governors of the provinces for careful investigation and action and all records are to be revised [as respectfully received from the emperor].[1]

1 China No. 1 Archives (ed.) *Archives on the Compilation and Revision of the Four Treasuries* Shanghai: Shanghai Antiquarian Press, 1997, pp. 1686–7.

This edict is terrifying. Firstly because the Qianlong Emperor's judgement of Mao Qiling's 'serious errors' is based only on the phrase 'Qing tutor' [*Qing shi*]. Secondly Qianlong infers that Mao Qiling perpetrated deliberate falsehoods on the basis that, in Kangxi 18 as a Hanlin Examining Editor while an official serving the Qing in his writings, he implied that he 'had not taken up an official post in the dynasty'. Was this disloyal? Thirdly the Qianlong Emperor maintained that Mao Qiling was implicated in the same crimes for which the Hanlin Academy Compiler Dai Mingshi was executed in the 51st year of the Kangxi reign, the character signifying 'and others' being added after the name of Dai Mingshi, no doubt suggesting a precedent based on the *Southern Mountain Collection* [*Nanshan ji*] case, and upgrading it to the status of a major case. Fourthly the Qianlong Emperor repeatedly declared that 'I never designated people as criminals on account of their speech or their writings' but approved his father Yongzheng's argument that the distinction between barbarians and Chinese was sufficient to indicate cultural differences. At this point Mao Qiling had already been dead for seventy years and up to his death he had repeatedly received a courteous reception by Kangxi. The Qianlong Emperor stated, soon after his death, that he had avoided investigation, simply because investigating him would have touched on his grandfather's legacy. Fifthly although the Qianlong Emperor 'hesitated to pelt the rat for fear of smashing the dishes' he had not previously been able to detect in *Cihua* any phrases which included prohibitions or taboos or could cover them up and required pardoning a dead person, yet he gave vent to his anger on the heads of Ji Yun and others who had not discharged fully their duty as cultural lackeys. This became the forerunner of the literary inquisition of writers who were difficult to examine; the five investigating officials in the department to which *Cihua* was submitted became scapegoats and were all punished.

Mao Qiling's *Cihua* is in two volumes [*juan*] and before his death was included in the collection entitled *Collected Works of Xihe* [Xihe wenji], Xihe being one of Mao Qiling's pseudonyms since he began composing music as a juvenile. The songs and verses that he composed were lyrics of love and eroticism which contemporary poets cite as path-breaking. The first volume of his book has a section entitled 'The Qing tutor goes to Zhejiang' [*Qing shi xia Zhe*] recording the story of a poet going to the famous Qiantang in the Ming-Qing interregnum with a sick slave girl from whom he is parted by death. The poet narrates his own experiences of the chaos that took place during the Hongguang regime of the Southern Ming, the background being 'the Qing tutor goes to Zhejiang', but Qianlong with other motives took it to be a false accusation.

The Board of Civil Office hastily discussed how to deal with respecting the imperial decree and heavily found the five including Ji Yun guilty of mistakes and falsifications. Ji Yun was ordered to be 'lowered a grade and transferred to another post'. His original appointment had been Vice President of the Board of Military Affairs and he was transferred to the Office of the Four Treasuries. In the end Qianlong, in his august wisdom, realised that without Ji Yun there would be no Four Treasuries therefore he promulgated an edict 'make it known that he be reduced in rank by one grade but by our leniency is permitted to remain in post'.

So, was the *Cihua* amended? To hand I have only the Jiaqing edition of *Hexi wenji* in which the two parts of the *Cihua* the phrase 'Qing tutor' remains as in the original. Then examining the summary of works on poetry and sung verse in the *Index to the Four Treasuries*, the *Cihua* still remains in the main catalogue. The summary of this book, includes 64 other examples of Mao Qiling's work; there is both praise and censure, and there is special acclaim for Mao Qiling's poetry but there is not a single character condemning this book's political errors and faults. The Catalogue was revised several times and only finalised in 1795 (Qianlong 60). Needless to say, it was regularly submitted to Qianlong for his approval. Could it be that Qianlong had forgotten his own repudiation of the *Cihua*? Or had he sorrowfully retracted his own judgment? There is no reliable evidence for this conclusion but it is known that Mao Qiling's posthumous work at least temporarily evaded the disaster of prohibition and destruction by Qianlong's court.

The Guangxu Period Imperial Edict to Prohibit Corrections to the Texts of the Four Books [Siku gaicuo]

The literary inquisition can be said to have been a characteristic of the Manchu Qing state from beginning to end. On 18 July 1894 (16th of 6th month in Guangxu 20), the Qing court issued two edicts in succession, both on the basis of a memorial from athe Henan provincial education commissioner Shao Songnian (1848–1923) instructing all governors-general and governors of provinces and metropolitan areas to act in unison: the first order was that senior officials of all provinces should instruct subordinate counties to re-engrave and publish widely and frequently *Important Words to Advise on Virtue* (*Quanshan yaoyan*] and 'ensure that it reached remote and backward places and every household so that there would be improvements and corrections of errors to assist me in improving the customs of the people'. The second

order was that provincial governors and governors-general issue instructions severely prohibiting the selling of Mao Qiling's book *Sishu gaicuo* reiterating that all levels of instructors and officials and their schools and colleges should read orders on the basis of the regulations for the selection of officials. Without exception they should take the annotated Neo-Confucian writings as the orthodox texts and may not admit any heterodox teachings or irregular literary styles, in order to assist the imperial government to uphold the best intentions of orthodox teachings [*Records from within the Eastern Flowery Gate* (*Guangxu chao donghua lu*) Volume 3, pp. 3430–3422, Zhonghua Shuju 1958].

One day previously the Guangxu Emperor had ordered Weng Tonghe to draft a document for a meeting in the imperial presence that would act as an addendum to an edict for sending to the Superintendent of Trade for the Northern Ports, Li Hongzhang, declaring that the Japanese deployment of troops to Korea must be opposed. The document stated that 'the Korean court unanimously advocated war' and, directed Li Hongzhang to take responsibility immediately for sending additional troops to Korea. From this point the Sino-Japanese War was inevitable and it was only seven days before it was sparked by the action of the Japanese military.

Therefore the Qing court that day issued an edict to the Superintendent of Trade for the Northern Ports, Li Hongzhang that he should engage in battle with the Japanese. [Guangxu ordered the Grand Council to promulgate this edict on 16th; see *Weng Tonghe's Diary*]. It was also issued to Li Hongzhang in his capacity as Governor-General of Zhili and to other senior provincial officials with instructions that they rigidly control popular customs and strictly suppress the two edicts on Mao Qiling's *Sishu gaicuo*. From what kind of political concept does that judgment stem? It is not appropriate to discuss that here, but although the Guangxu emperor had already technically come of age and had taken power in his own right, policy decisions on internal matters and foreign relations were still subject to the decrees of the Empress Dowager Cixi. From the opening shots until the disastrous defeat, on the Qing side the chief culprit in the 1894–5 Sino-Japanese War was undoubtedly Ci Xi and none of her defenders have been able to clear her of the guilt for this. Therefore at the same time under the pretext of 'changing popular customs' or 'upholding orthodox studies' at a critical time of foreign aggression, to tighten the cultural net internally once again, as if there were no threat of internal and external pincer attacks, is yet another blow to Ci Xi's reputation.

This phenomenon appears quite strange but in fact it is not too difficult to understand. The *jiawu* year of the Guangxu reign (1894) happened to be the Empress Dowager Cixi's 60th year. The first old woman [*lao taipo*] of this dynasty not only had blind faith in authority and fate but also feared that great

celebrations of her sixty years would not be safe. Her attitude towards the Japanese invaders changed from resolute advocacy of war to suing for peace even if territory had to be ceded. A cause for gossip was the need to maintain the imperial 'face' that she took responsibility for and this will be discussed elsewhere. As far as domestic matters were concerned she had always spread vicious talk that anyone who dared not to congratulate her on her sixtieth birthday, provoking her unhappiness, would not be forgiven. She warned against the Guangxu Emperor 'achieving majority' and seeking to break away from restraint by his supposed mother. Of course it goes without saying that around the time of the celebration of Cixi's birthday (October 10th or 7th November in the Western calendar) this weakling emperor tried to adopt strong measures to stabilise the domestic situation or at least prevent Cixi issuing orders that would disappoint and cause disturbance among the people.

Glancing at the official records of the Manchu Qing for 1894, the *jiawu* year of Guangxu, it is clear that for the six months prior to the outbreak of the Qing-Japanese War, in order to create an auspicious atmosphere for Cixi's birthday celebrations, the emperor continuously issued edicts in her name, bestowing the favour of the Empress Dowager on Manchu and Han officials and aristocrats, not forgetting to express her solicitude for the hardships of the people. The empire was already entirely corrupt and rotten to the core, there was official repression of popular opposition in response to public order disturbances in the capital. There were attacks on officials and cases of people charging into the Forbidden City to try to lodge complaints with the imperial court.

Henan was one of the provinces which experienced the most serious outbreaks of 'secret society rebellions' among the people: in this year there was another appearance of rebellion by massed members of the Dragon Society. Many leaders of the society were killed and large numbers of its members were detained. Therefore the Henan provincial educations commissioner Shao Songnian (1848–1923) petitioned the emperor, requesting a cleaning of the heart. This individual was a fellow countryman of, and well known to the imperial tutor Weng Tonghe.

However the Qing emperor, striving to make the whole nation 'unify with the same customs' produced new teaching materials, in fact the *Moral Exhortations to the People* [*Yuzhi quanshan yaoyan*], from the court of the emperor's 7th generation ancestor Shunzhi, published 239 years previously in 1655. This book had been immediately discarded by the Manchu aristocrat Oboi and others as coarse and rustic, even if the conquered Han Chinese officials and people, enlightened by its contents of admonitory aphorisms, willingly became docile citizens. It had been included, following the Qianlong emperor's edict, in the category of books that epitomised bogus morality.

The Guangxu Emperor complied with Weng Tonghe's ideas in what was a master-pupil relationship, in order to rectify and consolidate 'scholarly practices with popular feeling'. Mao Qiling, who had been dead for one hundred and eighty one years, and the *Sishu gaicuo* which he had destroyed himself towards the end of his life for the ninth Qing emperor's literary inquisition were increasingly referred to. Weng Tonghe had been the Guangxu emperor's tutor for almost twenty years and one of the main subjects that he taught his pupil was history. He knew well the history of the Manchu conquest of China and the policies of the Qing government and had frequently undertaken the responsibility of teaching graduates who had failed to receive an appointment at the Hanlin Academy and, like his fellow countyman and relation Shao Songnian was a proficient scholar. Shao Songnian's memorial to ask Guangxu to ban Mao Qiling's *Sishu gaicuo*, was undoubtedly a restatement of Weng Tonghe's point of view. The complete text of Shao Songnian's memorial runs to almost one thousand words, speaks first of Zhu Xi's great success in collecting together the principles of Confucius's thought, and then draws on Kangxi's *Yuzhi Zhu zi quanshu xu* and the edict on the investigation and decision on Xie Qishiin the 6th year of Qianlong, saying that 'our dynasty' venerates Zhu Xi's examples as meritorious orders and accusing Mao Qiling's *Sishu gaicuo* of being 'un Confucian and unorthodox'.

Shao Songnian, or some say also Weng Tonghe, was fully aware that when Mao Qiling heard that Kangxi had raised Zhu Xi to the list of ten philosophers recognised as disciples of Confucius, he had personally destroyed the blocks for printing *Sishu gaicuo*. Not only did he have a narrow escape from the disastrous literary inquisitions of the Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns, but this work was not included in his *Complete Works of Mr Mao Xihe* [*Mao Xihe quanji*] reissued in the first year of the Jiaqing reign. After that there were only privately printed single editions circulating in the street bookshops but lithographic editions of the Tongzhi and Guangxu period also circulated 'and Mao Qiling's *Sishu gaicuo* also spread everywhere in modern foreign-style printing'.

Mao Qiling's writings on the Four Books, eleven titles in all, among which are included *Critical Edition of the Analects* [*Lunyu jiqiu bian*], *Essays on the Great Learning Daxue zhengwen* became targets, as did *Zhu Xi sishu zhangju jizhu*. In the three reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong they were all widely circulated. The reason is very simple; it was because those specialist treatises had already been included either in the *Four Treasuries Siku quanshu* approved by the Qianlong Emperor or in the *Complete Works of Mao Qiling* [*Xihe quanji*] and had not yet been prohibited by the Qianlong government.

The old politician Weng Tonghe had been part of officialdom for a long time and was deeply acquainted with ways of avoiding trouble and political

trickery. Moreover in demanding that the Qing court ban the modern foreign printed versions of *Sishu gaicuo*, he was able to incriminate Mao Qiling's various works on the Four Books. The sudden appearance of the word 'foreign' cut off the possibility of using as a pretext Kangxi's commendation of Mao Qiling. Qianlong had also used Mao Qiling's 'lack of literary reputation' as a reason for not wanting to condemn him. Quite the reverse, the past misdeeds of Weng and Shao were raked up as censuring the series of sages.

Apart from in the *Guangxu reign records of the Eastern Flowered Chamber*, there are no written records of an edict by the Guangxu Emperor ordering all the provinces to ban the *Sishu gaicuo*. Even in those records there is no evidence of any senior provincial officials carrying out the task, including the Huguang Governor-General Zhang Zhitong, self-proclaimed expert on the rise and fall of Confucianism. Some say that this was connected to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War which had already broken out, but this is not exactly the case. No-one knows whether after the Anglo-French Allied Army had driven the Xianfeng emperor out of Beijing this was considered to be an omen that the 'family empire' of the Manchu Qing Aisin Gioro clan would be defeated. At the same time in the suppression of the Taiping and Nian rebellions the rise of the Hunan and Huai military chieftains gradually created a situation similar to that of the Tang military governors setting up separate regimes and the expansion of the power of provincial governors-general and governors.

The Empress Dowager Cixi controlled the two child emperors Tongzhi and Guangxu and the offices of imperial clansman and nobles. For a long time it appeared that Guangxu was unable to do much and it was common knowledge that Guangxu was a puppet emperor. Guangxu and Weng Tonghe may have used action against *Sishu gaicuo* as a philosophical pretext to restrain senior officials but this inevitably triggered local popular disturbances.

The only person to profit from Guangxu's edicts was the late Mao Qiling. They drew the attention of late Qing scholars towards works of Mao Qiling and others that had long since faded from the memory and this is shown in the criticism by Zhang Taiyan (Zhang Binglin 1868–1936) of Mao Qiling in the revised edition of his major text the *Book of Compulsion* [*Qiushu*].

ESSAY 18

Official History, Unofficial History and Jottings in the Qing Dynasty

The imperial rulers and usurpers of the middle ages, relying on their dictatorial power, intervened in the histories of defunct dynasties even with compilations of history in modern times by controlling the records of those dynasties. This is a longstanding tradition but few dynasties have been as utterly diabolical as the rulers of the Manchu Qing dynasty. In the 1930s the historian Meng Sen argued that the chronicles of events in the annals of previous eras in the *Qingshilu* and the officially compiled *Veritable Records* (*Shilu*) of the Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns, were 'altered wherever they wished' over a long period of time and that this had become a routine. 'Correcting the *Shilu* became a constant factor for the Qing period; it was their daily meat and drink' [*Ming Qing shi lun zhu jikan* Zhonghua Shuju 1959 pp. 619–621].

Since the *Veritable Records* are not in fact veritable and the historical works that were compiled under the Manchu Qing dynasty all share the same faults, in order to understand the truth of Qing history, extensive rsearch in unofficial sources both in our native country and even overseas is essential. For example researches on late Qing history, the so-called 'unofficial histories' *yeshi*, literary jottings *biji*, stele biographies *beizhuan*, genealogies *nianpu*, diaries, letters and other correspondence, memoirs, and the written accounts of foreigners etc., are more and more valued by writers.

Of course one cannot refuse to use officially compiled Qing dynasty histories; they were after all compiled on the basis of official archives and although certain events and incidents are changed in editing yet there still remain clues like the thread of a spider or the trail of a horse. Similarly one cannot believe everything in unofficial historical material. For example Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692) in the early Qing dynasty had been a messenger in the messenger office of the regime of the Southern Ming Prince of Gui and had participated in diplomatic activities. But his *Yongli shilu*, included material about the Empress Dowager of this minor dynasty; the majority of officials converting to Roman Catholicism; the control by the Empress Dowager of the court administration; and even the sending of envoys to request the Catholic Church to organise a new crusade to support the Southern Ming resistance to the Qing. No traces can be found of historical events of this magnitude. It is difficult to be sure

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what can really be called reliable history when there are similarly existing faults in the 'unveritable *Veritable Records*'.

Literary jottings by people of the Qing on the history of that dynasty gradually increased after the Jiaqing court had been forced to demonstrate some flexibility in controlling the expression of political views. Whether intentionally or accidentally, some writers filled gaps in the history of the establishment of the Qing state; some re-examined disputed cases that had been left by deceased emperors, some questioned the validity of methods of government of previous eras and even overturned the verdicts of old cases. This type of contradictory historical exposition has become more and more common, so that people of later generations who wanted to understand the true face of the Qing dynasty must pay attention to examining and differentiating between the contradictions between official and unofficial history. Previously Fu Sinian (1896–1950) declared that 'historical materials are historiography' and the highest pursuit in turning the materials unearthed into historical researched was bias. But in half a century the fashion for so-called 'history from theory' (properly theory **instead of** history) has resulted in historiography being turned into a compilation of quotations, just as if it were the Amplified *Instructions on the Sacred Edict of the Kangxi Emperor* [issued by the Yongzheng Emperor in 1724 for posting and reading aloud in every town and village] being rolled of the press, which would be even more absurd.

There is no need to dwell further on the faults of the Qing period *biji* and unofficial histories. For many years there has been much specialist work by scholars within and outside China in this area. Among this work there is no lack of either gossip or insight. From the point of view of the history of scholarship, they emphasise literary quotations and pay little attention to knowledge and insight, preferring gossip to correspondence.

For instance since the end of the last century, *Qingdai shiliao biji* (*Notes on materials for Qing history*), the series edited and reprinted by Zhonghua Press, is no longer firmly divided into 'Qing period' and 'modern history', no longer rigidly adheres to the categories of famous people or famous works, but has just one category of 'historical materials'; objectively it is a form of attack on 'history led by theory'. At the same time, publishing organs in various localities are vying with each other to publish similar types of unofficial anecdotal history, notes and jottings, including fake and inferior publications, some of which were plagiarised from the editions edited by others or unscholarly works that jump to wild conclusions. That is an inevitable phenomenon of the process of the universal spread of scholarship. Obviously the majority of scholars in the past were obliged to find their sources in collections of 'historical'

materials such as *Qingbei leimiao, Qingchao yeshi daguan* and other works that are not recognised. Moreover because of the difficulty of distinguishing truth from falsehood, they cannot be cited with confidence, although undoubtedly it was convenient to use them. Many reissued or newly published unofficial histories and jottings have additional annotated explanations, introducing the writer and the edition; even more have an introduction to the contents interspersed with comments. The frequent failings set out previously are common in this type of explanatory material. In the past sixty years scholars have continuously 'bathed' their solicitude for humanist scholars forcibly dragged in a high temperature cauldron—if they are not boiled to death they are confused by the heat. If they follow the example of the pure scholars of the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods considering historical works, they were also transfixed with fear lest they inadvertently violated a taboo and became bogged down in the literary web. Therefore it has become a convention that in the editing of ancient books, writing prefaces and postscripts and even annotated readings, it was essential to declare where one stood and establish one's 'political correctness'. Of course these standpoints vary from individual to individual; some are reluctant and unconvincing, others are simply nauseating.

In recent years I have frequently read foreign and Chinese reissues or new editions of Qing jottings and unofficial histories. Apart from errors in the editing, including the plagiarism of mistakes in my own work that I had already corrected in subsequent editions, there is also the sensation of having swallowed a fly by mistake and I cannot help laughing often because of the editor's irrelevant and incongruous political correctness.

Noted jottings from the late Qing necessarily discussed Fa Shishan's (1753–1813) *Qing mi shu wen* (*Secret narratives of the Qing*) and *Taolu zalu* and Xiao Lian's *Su zalu*, Fu Ge's *Tingyu zongtan* (*Talking Freely while Listening to the Rain*) etc. They were all bannermen, Fa Shishan of the Imperial Household and the Mongol Plain Yellow Banner; Xiaolian a Manchu imperial clansman and a hereditary noble; Fu Ge of the Imperial Household and Chinese Yellow Bordered Banner. It happens that the three of them represented the three great ethnic banner groups and needless to say contents of the *biji* of the three have differing ethnic orientations from the privileged Qing elite. Of the three Fu Ge (Feng Fuge) is the least known. Up to the publication in December 1959 of *Tingyu zongtan*, based on a copy preserved by Fu Zengxiang and published by Beijing Zhonghua Press, historians of modern China were not aware that in the Xianfeng and Tongzhi periods of the Qing dynasty there existed such a Chinese bannerman. He was the great grandson of Governor-General Ying Lian (1707–1783) a Grand Secretary of the late Qianlong period and in the

latter period of the decline of the aristocracy was only able to become assistant to a general. When imperial forces were dispatched to put down the Nian rebellion he became the Commander of the Mongol Prince Senggerinchin's Shandong Field Headquarters and after Senggerinchin's death was appointed magistrate of Juzhou in Shandong.

I still recall my first sight of *Tingyu zongtan* in 1960 and my particular interest in the way that the origin of the Manchu Eight Banners was described. However after then reading *Baqi tongzhi* (*The Gazetteer of the Eight Banners*) and the veritable records of the early Qing period, I sensed that the history as narrated by Fu Ge was superficial. Unexpectedly after a lapse of forty years, in reading it in preparation for this book I discovered that Fa Ge criticised the Manchu Qing official system for the compilation of histories in the following manner:

> Current compiled biographies of high officials are all Hanlin. Within the Hanlin there are many Zhejiang people writing and there are many factional differences between them. Generally they favour the Han rather than Manchus and the civil rather than military officials, then Hanlin Academicians rather than others, and the home provinces rather than more remote ones.

That year, when I first came across this theory of Fu Ge's, I could not avoid being astonished, having believed that he retained the prejudice of 'Manchu inside Han outside' and had inverted history. Later I sank into depravity as a cow (abbreviation for Mao-style terminology *niugui sheshen* 'monsters and demons or evil people of all descriptions'), overcome with boredom, rereading various works of Qing dynasty classic history and examining this theory of Fu Ge's, in the light of what I knew of Qing historiography. At first I dimly saw the light and accepted that this theory of so called 'historical authority' was actually not a fallacy. Even if during the Manchu Qing conquest, with the complex relations of the conquered peoples, priority was given to Manchus, in cultural terms the history of Confucianism was monopolised by Han officials. They occupied traditionally powerful areas of influence like the Hanlin Academy, the Household Administration of the Heir Apparent and the Office of the Supervisory Secretaries and Censors. Through political stratagems they were able to protect the interests of Han people and their lands, even if only by making their position clear to people in authority when their was internal political strife. Many years of repeatedly reading Manchu Qing official historical materials has led me to believe that Fu Ge's theory is not authoritative.

The document previously cited has the following theory:

> It has become common practice through long usage even if the worthy ones do not avoid it. The Manchu people are divided into civil and military and in the same way the Han people are divided into peripheral and internal. The frontiers and provinces are divided by family background. Jiangsu and Zhejiang are divided into central and external. Even the code of ritual for the departed (*shizhong zhi dian*) is written as an imperial edict in which there is good or bad, high or low. The Manchus, the Han and the frontier peoples and the military men do not exceed four of the five elements. Hanlin and senior metropolitan officials must be arranged in order of official rank and details of how they are to be treated run to thousands of characters at great and tedious length. Writing these biographies, those who like their subjects, cut out criticism and write about their commendations, those who hate them do precisely the opposite, minimising praise and emphasising the censures. Brief accounts of commendation do not include the whole text but just say 'praised', in the case of demotion or serious censure the whole text might not be written just 'punished' or 'severely rebuked'.

By that time there was already no Hanlin Academy or Academy of National Histories (*guoshiguan*), but the code of ritual for the departed *shizhong zhi dian* of the high officials and aristocrats, especially the 'appraisal' in obituary notices and memorial speeches, was marked by contested words and expressions, with the result that year after year the corpse does not get cremated. This often leads people to doubt whether they have misunderstood the times they have been living in, not knowing whether one is still the subject of an 18th century emperor. Fifty six Chinese ethnic minority groups struggling to break free from this kind of slave mentality have struggled for over a hundred years and it would appear that we are still dealing with a historical problem that we have been bequeathed.

August 8 2008.

PART 3

On Reform or Modernisation

ESSAY 19

Dealing with Corruption under the Jiaqing Emperor

In 1799, the fourth year of the Jiaqing reign, the Jiaqing Emperor launched a coup d'etat to eliminate the powerful and corrupt Heshen who had been a favourite of the Qianlong Emperor, and immediately announced 'all for reform or modernisation', the classical foundation for this being the *False Ancient Text Book of Documents—Shangshu* (*Wei guwen shangshu*).

Qing period public and private records all say that the Imperial Counsellor Wang Niansun (1744–1832) advised Jiaqing on this. According to the *Qing History Biographies*, no sooner had the father of the emperor (Qianlong) breathed his last than Wang Niansun 'made allegations against the Grand Secretary Heshen, in a memorial to the emperor, and took instructions on the interpretation of the classics, the great deeds of the heart of the sage'. This great scholar of classical Chinese philology of the Qianlong and Jiaqing eras knew clearly that the concept of reform came from a counterfeit book but he also knew that this book was still one of the key texts used by the sons of Manchu emperors for studying traditional teachings. To bolster the morale of the emperor in this coup d'etat, he could not take account of the veracity of classical interpretation.

Some years ago in my 'From Qianlong to Jiaqing' that appeared in *Tradition of the Undetermined Tone* published by Liaoning Educational Press (1994, pp. 141–158), I pointed out that although the Jiaqing emperor was a mediocre ruler he had a powerful desire to monopolise authority and an even more powerful desire to monopolise money. As soon as he came to power in his own right, without taking into account the so-called sacred teachings such as, 'not changing the path of the father for three years can be called filial piety', which he maintained reflected his own beliefs, he carried out a surprise attack on Heshen who had just been making arrangements for the funeral of the Qianlong emperor. At this time Wang Niansun found for him in the false classics reasons why a palace coup did not flout the principles of the filial way, so of course it was deeply engraved on the imperial heart.

But history is never as simple as that. The Jiaqing emperor, it can be said, grasped the opportunity. Qianlong, who was on the throne for almost 64 years, did not alter the 'dogma of the power of the sovereign' right up to his death. In his later hears he doted on Heshen, and regarded him as a favourite courtier,

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although with bribery and the connivance of others he had seized power. Qianlong did not allow anyone else to control the imperial guards and in the years before his death he raised Heshen to the position of commandant and grand councillor. The emperor died not long after, leaving the empire mired in political corruption and swarms of popular uprisings. As the poet and statesman, Jia Yi of the Han dynasty said, 'the cries of the land under heaven are gifts to assist the new ruler'. The Jiaqing emperor, with a corpse on the throne for three years and faced by the combined anger of the officials and the people, needed someone to act as scapegoat for the former emperor. Heshen was declared to have acted in a disorderly manner and overstepped his authority, while evading his responsibilities. As soon as the emperor made a move Heshen submitted to arrest and was targeted by the emperor and impeached for his involvement in politics and corruption.

The Jiaqing emperor was well read in the literature and history of the Tang Dynasty. It is related that when he arrested Heshen, he was inspired by the story that the Tang emperor Daizong secretly killed the corrupt eunuch Li Fuguo who he had 'esteemed like a father', but did so by going contrary to the correct path. However Jiaqing seems to have preferred the precedent of Tang Dezong who, under various circumstances, 'took what is bestowed for the public in the empire as the ruler's private possession; officials were no longer able to pry into how much this amounted to' [see *Zizhi tongjian* for the 14th year of the Dali reign of the Tang emperor Daizong]. The surprise attack he launched on Heshen was in the form of an edict saying that Heshen's family property should be identified and confiscated. This was done and a total of 109 lists were compiled; 26 detailed lists that had previously been estimated were made public. The total value amounted to more than 225 million *liang* of silver. This was four times the annual tax receipts for the national exchequer at that time. People awaited imperial proclamations about the 83 lists that had not yet been calculated but they did not see the following text. There was a Manchu Brigadier General, Sabintu, who did not know the emperor, had brazenly submitted a memorial to the emperor requesting that the emperor thoroughly investigate whether Heshen had concealed any property. Jiaqing was extremely angry and issued a reprimand, 'Does Sabintu see me as the ruler who likes money and goods and can it be that he intends to compare me with Tang Daizong?' [*Donghualu* Jiaqing 4 4th month 24th] This is really giving himself away, proving that he was aware that he was secretly following the old tactics of Tang Daizong. Some scholars of Qing history have calculated that when the Jiaqing emperor confiscated the property of Heshen, the total value not less than 800 million *liang* of silver, three quarters of which found its way

into the emperor's private internal treasury. No wonder that the saying spread among the people that 'Heshen took a tumble and Jiaqing ate his fill'.

Jiaqing became more and more covetous as part of the corrupt and degenerate Manchu Qing autocratic system. Since the emperor was the greatest perpetrator of corruption, 'when the jackals and the wolves held sway, why pick on the fox?'

Jiaqing, whose temple name was Renzong reigned in his own right for a total of 21 years (1799–1820). According to new annotations to the editions of the *Four Books* made by imperial order for this emperor's father and grandfather, there was agreement with the notes and commentary provided by Zhu Xi of the Southern Song, 'To be human is to exercise benevolence, to treat relations as they should be treated is noble'. Thus what is of chief importance in the benevolence [*ren*] of the Jiaqing emperor is 'to treat relations as they should be treated' [*qin qin*] preserving the privileges of the various strata of society, from the Manchu imperial household and the nobles of the Eight Banners to the Han Chinese scholar officials. The priority was of course the precedence of the banners over the Han and other lower orders.

Therefore during the 21 years when Jiaqing ruled in person there were continual crises, obvious examples being the threats of assassination and palace coups which obliged the emperor time and time again to issue edicts of condemnation, for which there was no precedent in the history of the Qing.

Because of the practice of 'Qing history being sliced at the waist' that I have pointed out previously, according to the 1840 line designated by Mao Zedong, the history of the Qing is divided by two wooden pegs: before 1840 (Daoguang 20) is 'ancient history' but after that date is 'modern history'. From the rectification campaigns of Yenan [in 1942] to the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, a period of forty years, through the repeated propaganda pronouncements of mainstream historiography, 'modern' always began in 1840, so the Jiaqing reign and the first twenty years of the Daoguang reign were deemed to belong to the final phase of China's ancient history. Taking an analogy from life, the final phase of a disease is when it has attacked the vital organs and is beyond cure and the messenger of death is close at hand. Noone can believe that the patient can still revive or return to life. In historical circles on the mainland over the past half century, 'ancient history' theorists maintained that Jiaqing and Daoguang were heading towards their doom, and disdained to consider an elegy for them: 'modern history' theorists argued that the Opium War inaugurated the new epoch of 'national history', and that there is no need to look back to the history of the Jiaqing and Daoguang periods. As a result, in the forty years between Jiaqing ruling in his own right and the Daoguang

emperor banning opium, whether one is investigating the modernisation process of China's moving towards the world or the world forcing itself into China, they all belong to a turning point in the space-time continuum of history, and what is more have been studied only inadequately.

Returning to the historical questions raised by this book, in the forty years before the Opium War between the Qing and the British, the Jiaqing emperor Qing Renzong had already brought up again the ideas of 'reform' and 'modernisation' and some works on Qing history speak of 'Jiaqing reforms'—does this correspond with historical reality?

4 April 2008 Qingming in the *wuzi* year, at night.

ESSAY 20

Looking at the Jiaqing 'Reforms' or 'Modernisation'

Even though in 1644, the year that the Manchu Qing entered China through the passes, the regent Dorgun issued an imperial proclamation graciously assenting to 'reform' [*gaige*] or 'modernisation' or 'renewal' [*weixin*], during the four successive reigns of Shunzhi, Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong, a period of over one and a half centuries, these two phrases vanished from imperial edicts. Forty days after the Shunzhi Emperor took power in his own right, he turned against Dorgon. The reason was the internal dissension within the Manchu aristocracy, but there is also a tradition that Dorgon had had a romantic entanglement with the emperor's mother, the Empress Dowager Xiaozhuang and had even taken her as his wife secretly [one of the so called three great mysteries of the early Qing—see Meng Sen *Investigations on the Empress Dowager's marrying a lower status husband*]. What was the reality? The Shunzhi Emperor and his descendants were obliged to continue Dorgon's so-called reform course of 'using the Han to control the Han'. After the penitential decree issued on the death of the Shunzhi Emperor, it was acknowledged that the Manchus 'simple and honest old system needs daily reform', and his great-grandson in 1778 (Qianlong 43) issued a proclamation restoring Dorgon's reputation, speaking in glowing terms of the regent's pioneering work, the proof of that being that the empire was unified and flourishing.

However the taboo of the Qing court towards the term 'modernisation' [*weixin*] still continued. Up to the first month of spring in 1799, the 4th year of Jiaqing, the eighty-nine year old Qianlong emperor suddenly passed away, three years after having creating the 'political tutelage' at his abdication in favour of his son, with the title of retired emperor *taishanghuang*. The seemingly content puppet emperor Jiaqing suddenly took action, and at a stroke eliminated Heshen, shocking the court and the country. What also shocked the court and country was that a number of days after forcing Heshen to commit suicide he promoted the view that 'reluctant followers of the deceitful should not be executed' annd 'all must take part in modernisation'.

I have already set out the history of the Heshen case briefly in [*Zouchu zhoongshiji* (*Coming out of the Middle Ages*), Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2007, pp. 239–245], but it should be noted here that Jiaqing emperor made no attempt to conceal the one hundred and fifty year old two characters of 'modernisation' and once again they were transformed into one of the highest instructions.

On the basis of the repeated citing by the Jiaqing Emperor of the two phrases, 'reluctant followers of deceitful should not be executed' and 'all should take part in modernisation' it is clear that Dorgon's public declarations that year on 'reform' and 'modernisation' have their source in the *Yingzheng* [*Punitive Expedition of Yin*] in *Shangshu* [the *Book of Documents* or *Classic of History*] in the Five Classics that had been promulgated by order of the emperor during the Ming dynasty. In this section there are four teachings: 'exterminate the opponent rebel leader'; 'deal with bad habits acquired from the ancients; reluctant followers of deceitful should not be executed' and 'all should take part in modernisation'. According to the Confucian scholars of the Tang and Song periods, *Punitive Expedition of Yin* was originally a proclamation by the Xia emperor Zhongkang ordering the princes of the kingdom of Yin to send a punitive expedition against rebel aristocrats, before despatching troops announcing his policy. Principal culprits had to be dealt with, reluctant followers of the army that had surrendered could be exonerated, but must break with all old and decayed traditions, and only then be allowed to correct their errors and make a fresh start.

Current research continues on the history of classics in the Qing dynasty. A century of research from Yan Ruoqu [1636–1704] to Hui Dong [1697–1758], Wang Mingsheng [1722–1797] and other scholars not holding an official position, has included studies of the ancient texts within the *Punitive Expedition of Yin*, and it appears that they are not documents of Three Dynasties [Xia, Shang and Zhou] compiled and fixed by Confucius and his followers of later years, but were forgeries fabricated during the Wei-Jin period over six hundred years after the death of Confucius. For the *Siku quanshu zongmu* compiled by official decree in the Qianlong period this was already regarded as an ironclad case. When the Jiaqing Emperor disposed of the case of Heshen, a shift of power became entangled with personal rivalries in a palace coup, and moreover was disguised as an argument of principle based on the classics. How was one to know that the classical basis from *False Ancient Text Book of Documents* already denied by his father would reveal that this emperor mixed the spurious with the genuine, believed in the false classic and consciously discarded genuine knowledge?

In using the false classics the Jiaqing emperor only had in mind their negative aspects. At the end of the Qing dynasty, because Zhang Taiyan (Zhang Binglin) had disseminated the idea of a 'revolution to eject the Manchus' he was imprisoned in the Shanghai concession, where he wrote the essay 'Acknowledging the absurdity of using the two characters *weixin* [modernisation]', which was published in issue no 3 of *National Daily* [*Guomin riribao*, one of the founders of which was Chen Duxiu] on 9 August 1903, his target being the royalist

proclamations of Kang Youwei and others, but in fact also exposing the truth about Manchu officialdom making use of false modernisation as a cover for the reality of autocracy or despotism since 1799 (Jiaqing 4).

> The innovations of the Manchus took place in the two reigns of Kangxi and Yongzheng. The present day government is the corrupt and moth-eaten remnant that cannot be restored to usefulness. And if want to demand it to renew, how is that different from demanding that an old man near to death cry like a baby being breastfed.

From the announcement of the Xianyu reforms in 1799 to Zhang Binglin's despair of the Manchu Qing modernisation in prison in 1903, there were five dynasties and one hundred years of empire. I have already cited as evidence the preface to the Chinese editions (November 2003) of *The World Economy: a Millennium Perspective*, written by the distinguished economic historian, Angus Maddison; twenty years before the Sino-British Opium War (1820, that it the 25th year of Jiaqing) China's total output value was still 33% of the total world GDP; the invasion by the great powers and the Manchu Qing government's repeated battles and repeated defeats, continuous ceding of territory and payment of reparations or indemnities to Britain, France, Russia, Japan, Germany, America etc, betraying its rights and interests. However by 1900 (Guangxu 26) when the Allied Armies invaded China [to relieve the siege of the foreign legations in Beijing], China's GDP was 11% the world total, approximately the same as mainland China's total output value one hundred years later. Mainstream historians explain this as a straight line of evolution.

Is this the case when some Qing historians speak in glowing terms of the Jiaqing 'modernisation', calling it the 'Jiaqing reforms'? I take the view that it requires further consideration.

30 March 2008.

ESSAY 21

The Emperor's Penitential Decree

Reading Qing history, one often comes across the emperor issuing a 'penitential decree' [*zuiji*]. Included in the list of those who did is the Shunzhi emperor whose temple name was Shizu. At the age of 24 he contracted smallpox and was on the point of dying, causing the early creation of a 'testamentary edict' [*yizhao*]. Ruling in his own right for ten years, he departed from the old Manchu system, gradually adopting some of the customs of the Han, indicating repentance and enumerating as many as 14 of his own 'faults'. This edict may have been revised by his ministers but, because the Shunzhi Emperor was revered as the first ancestor of the Qing after entering the passes [and conquering China] his instructions were passed down to posterity.

The so-called penitential decree began by tradition with Yu of the Xia dynasty and Tang of the Shang dynasty. It was taken as a model in the classics of the middle ages, and it was said that 'everywhere there are many difficulties but the blame lies with the emperor personally'. After the publication of the *Luntai Edict of Repentance* in the later years of Han Wudi, it became a conventional formula for emperors of successive dynasties forced to criticise themselves when they had behaved outrageously or illegally, wrecked the country and brought ruin on the people. Su Shi (Su Dongpo) of the Northern Song, discussing Lu Zhi, urged the Tang Emperor Dezong to issue an edict of repentance asking him to, 'criticise yourself to gather in the hearts of the people, reform in order to comply with the way of heaven'.

But although the Shunzhi Emperor set an example as he was apparently approaching death, his descendants did not feel obliged to follow it. His son, the Kangxi Emperor, did occasionally make some self-criticisms and his grandson, the Yongzheng Emperor, liked to reprimand Manchu and Han dissidents to display his own brilliance. His great-grandson, the Qianlong Emperor, not only got rid of historical records on the dictatorial power of the emperor, but also created new records conniving at corruption of power. Who was to know that heaven would not assist and that in the second year of his isolation after his abdication (1797), there would be a great fire in Qianlong's palace and the 'imperial treasures of the son of heaven' concealed or stored in the Palace of Exalted Intimacy would be completely destroyed in the conflagration. The eighty seven year old former emperor was exhausted and confused and on this occasion made an exception and issued an 'edict of self examination'.

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Comparatively speaking the Jiaqing emperor seems to have learned much from his great-great-grandfather. When he came to the throne and began to rule in his own right, he had Heshen arrested and punished for his crimes. Was it not as the *Yijing* [*Book of Changes*] says, a case of 'dealing with the insanity of the fathers', covering up the vicious conduct of the former emperor in his latter years? After having completed the requisite period of mourning he returned to the bamboo mat where the official interpreters expounded the classics and discussed statecraft with Han and Manchu officials. Every year he led his aristocratic kinsmen of the Eight Banners to the Mulan Imperial Hunting Park to hunt and practice the martial arts. How could this not be scrupulous observance of the ancestral system? Unfortunately the gods seem not to have been looking on him with favour. He confiscated Heshen's property and condemned him to death and immediately imitated the general amnesty of the first year of Shunzhi's reign, promulgated the 'modernisation' which provoked the Hanlin Academy compiler Hong Liangji to send a memorial criticising him and saying that he did not have the sincere intention of reforming. He immediately forgot that he had 'sent down an edict requesting blunt speaking' and banished Hong Liangji to Ili. Unexpectedly within a few months there was a major drought in the capital. He repeatedly prayed for rain but the drought worsened and victims of the disaster roamed throughout the land. He was afraid that the natural disaster would induce further popular rebellions and felt obliged to issue a penitential decree, saying that the drought was heaven's punishment because of dissatisfaction with his offensive words. He issued another edict that Hong Liangji was to be released and allowed to return to his original place of registration, Changzhou, where he would be put under surveillance by local officials. At the same time Hong Liangji's memorial of remonstration to the emperor was made public:

> All officials within and without the court know that your highness is a monarch who does not reject criticisms and gloss over his mistakes, is genuinely a monarch with whom it is possible to speak. Officials fortunate enough to be received by the emperor can either speak or not speak to him, but if they fail to follow the thinking of the emperor he will have to shoulder much trouble in striving to rule.

I have said that the imperial edict was an edict of penance that the Jiaqing emperor was obliged to send down after omens from celestial phenomena, and this was also the way that this emperor made his own petition to heaven entreating forgiveness. According to the accounts of imperial officials, the sincerity of the Jiaqing emperor moved heaven and at noon on that day a vermillion rescript in the emperor's own hand was distributed inside and outside the

court, and in the afternoon dark clouds gathered and everywhere there was a timely rainfall [see *Hong Liangji an* (The Hong Liangji Case), in *Yindiao weiding de chuantong* pp. 159–172].

Obviously emulating the Shunzhi Emperor's penitential decree caused the Jiaqing emperor to feel that this confession had really 'gathered in the hearts and minds of the people' and complied with the laws of heaven. When he was crown prince he was very attentive to the history of the middle years of the Tang dynasty. It was said that when Heshen was arrested he was inspired by the Tang emperor Daizong, who, after the death of emperor Suzong, secretly assassinated the powerful eunuch Li Fuguo. After appropriating the vast majority of Heshen's property, he indignantly denounced the proposals of a Manchu Brigadier-General that there should be investigations as to whether Heshen had concealed any property. This echoed the transfer of property from corrupt officials to the emperor's private treasury under Tang Daizong and it is clear that the emperor was fully aware of the true purpose of Lu Zhi wanting Tang Daizong to issue a penitential edict, which was to cover up faults and hoodwink the public.

Thus the Qing Emperor Renzong, after his success in dealing with the Hong Liangji case which met with calamity, issued a penitential edict; from the historical records of the Jiaqing reign period it can be seen that this happened at least twice.

One occasion was in 1803 during the second intercalary month; the Jiaqing Emperor was returning to the palace from a journey, when some men brandishing knives attempted to assassinate him, but were swiftly seized by the Palace Guards. These people were connected to Chen De, who had been the house slave of a bannerman in the Imperial Household, and confessed that because they had lost their employment they had been desperate and taken a risk. The emperor escaped unscathed and after the event was simultaneously frightened and angry. After ordering the Nine Chief Ministers and Supervising Secretaries and Censors jointly to examine the case, which did not produce a result, he hurriedly issued an edict sentencing his assailants to a lingering death. At the same time he issued a penitential edict, saying that for eight years he had been monarch of all the empire, had previously regarded the 'whole court and officials as the brothers nephews or close family of the emperor', and did not understand why such murders could appear. 'Those who were shamed by the emperor were immoral and indecent and must have lost virtue. This episode frightened me when I cultivate virtue, am conscientious in government and love the people, so I must examine myself and find that I am to blame'. Of course more importantly he strengthened imperial guards at the palace and at any point where the imperial procession halted.

In 1813 (Jiaqing 8) the emperor would issue another penitential edict. On this occasion the emperor's self criticism was provoked not by an individual but by a 'heretical teaching', by the name of *Tianlijiao* [Heavenly Principles].

The Heavenly Principles sect was also known as the Eight Trigrams and is connected, although scholars differ on this, with the White Lotus Rebellion stamped out in 1804 (Jiaqing 9) by the Qing government in the provinces of Sichuan, Hubei and Hunan. One point that is clear is that it was a popular religious secret society; another is that their modus operandi were similar. However there are some differences in the activities of the Heavenly Principles who were concentrated in northern Henan, central Hebei and western Shandong, whereas the White Lotus was much closer to the Qing capital and its region. The leader of the Chop Trigrams, Lin Qing, in particular used Daxing in the environs of the capital as the base for propagating his teachings, and moreover recruited a number of court eunuch officials and garrison troops of the Han military banners into his sect, posing a serious internal threat for the Qing court.

The Heavenly Principles sect decided to seize the opportunity of the emperor's 'Mulan autumn hunt' in 1813 and the consequent void left in the capital for a comprehensive uprising, and stormed and captured the imperial palace. In the Henan county of Huaxian the main force of the Shock Trigram [*Zhengua*] controlled by its leader Li Wencheng was routed by Qing forces, but even after Lin Qing had lost these reinforcements he still risked a fight. There were eunuch officials planted inside the palace and they were able to breach the Longzong Gate but were hopelessly outnumbered, and were annihilated by scores of men armed with fowling pieces personally directed by the emperor's second son, Minning—this Minning was unofficially designated by the Jiaqing Emperor as crown prince because of his bravery and later ruled as the Daoguang Emperor.

The Jiaqing Emperor en route back to the palace was naturally alarmed and even before he got back to the palace he had issued a 'penitential edict on encountering unexpected rebellion', saying that in his 18 years on the throne he had consistently been cautious and conscientious and had never committed 'cruel or tyrannical acts that would harm the people', so 'suddenly encountering this rebellion was really difficult to comprehend'. However what he did 'understand' in his incisive written style was how to move, with one stroke of the writing brush, from self criticism to criticism of others: 'the sudden rebellion is a calamity that has been building up for some time and has caused harm today. I have exhorted the officials three times and worn myself out talking so how have the officials not been able to comprehend that, governing lazily and idly as they do, they are risking events like those at the end of the

Han, Tang, Song and Ming dynasties!' The emperor was obviously scared witless, forgetting the most recent 'historical example', namely the attack on the Ming court by Li Zicheng and the Chongzhen emperor's suicide by hanging on Coal Hill in Beijing.

Since trouble was brewing close at hand, in the final analysis, it was, as his father Qianlong was in the habit of saying, 'the sovereign may be honest but the officials are not good'. From the court to the frontiers, central and external officials, none could escape suffering the bamboo [punishment]. 'If officials wish to be faithful and upright servants of the Great Qing Dynasty, they must be wholeheartedly for the state, assist in my faults, change the habits of the people; if they abandon themselves to mean and base conduct, they should then hang up their caps and resign from their official posts, and be sure to never hold on to the position like a living corpse.'

Perhaps the criticism was too trenchant for on the 17th of the 9th month of 1813 (Jiaqing 18), after this penitential edict was promulgated, in similar terms, the emperor returned to the palace, and no doubt also following strict prohibition of 'heterodox teachings', punished officials who were suspected of having been involved, and even banned and had destroyed 'anecdotal novels' and other materials. Those documents are all very interesting and it is possible to consult records of imperial edicts from the 9th to the 12th month of the same year in *Veritable Records of the Qing* and *Supplementary Records of the Eastern Flowery Gate*.

Can it be that the scholar gentry inside and outside the court all willingly accepted that Jiaqing was 'taking the blame' and defending himself and his own autocracy and were not able to take any action? After the Liu Qing incident had passed, there were no officials inside and outside the court who 'abandoned themselves to mean and base conduct' and applied to retire early; that class of muddleheaded high officials 'occupied their posts like living corpses' as of old. That is to say that less than two years after the occurrence of what is sometimes called 'the rebellion of 1813', there was a young scholar of only 24 *sui* who was could not refrain from writing that the crisis of the empire not only had not passed but was in the process of comprehensively going from an 'age of decline' to an age of chaos'. This individual was Gong Zizhen. Rereading the essays that he wrote in 1815–16 (Jiaqing 20–21), his responses to Jiaqing's repeated penitential edicts may possibly be closer to an explanation of the historical truth.

2008 April 20, drafted at night.

ESSAY 22

The Qing Emperor Makes a Show of Conciliating the British Ambassador

On 28 August 1816 (the 6th day of the 7th month of Jiaqing 21) a 75 strong diplomatic mission headed by Lord Amherst that had been dispatched by the British government 23 years after the 1793 (Qianlong 58) Macartney mission appeared at the gates of the imperial palace in Beijing. It was already dawn and the Jiaqing emperor summoned to an audience his brother in law, Duke Heshitai, who was secretary of the Lifanyuan, and the Secretary of the Board of Rites, Mukechenge, to enquire whether they had previously instructed the 'British official presenting tribute' on the etiquette of prostration before the emperor—in fact Amherst had complied with his deputy, George Staunton's suggestion that they resist the demands to kowtow and had already indicated his displeasure. The emperor summoned the 'tribute-bearing envoy' to an audience but was then formally informed by Heshitai that 'the envoy has fallen sick'. When the emperor ordered his deputies to attend, he was told that the 'deputy envoys had also fallen sick.' This was of course a lie by the imperial brother-in-law, because the reason Amherst refused to present himself for an audience was that the 'ceremonial dress and the letters of credentials were not ready'. The emperor would have lost face comprehensively in front of the Manchu court nobility and officials as this was not a trivial matter: 'I am the lord of all under heaven, can I be treated with such disrespect and arrogance, and be willing to put up with this?' He immediately issued an imperial edict, 'these tribute bearing officials and the others must this day be sent away, their king's memorial to me may not be accepted, their tribute must all be immediately returned'.

As has been mentioned previously, this 'farsighted emperor' of the Manchu Qing dynasty blamed himself and was modest and unassuming and also capable of self-criticism (as in 'The emperor's penitential edict'). He was furious at the British envoys and obviously he could not forget the incidents that had occurred in the previous few years. British naval vessels had attacked the shore batteries at Macau (Aomen) in 1808 (Jiaqing 13) and, two years previously, senior palace officials had been implicated in the attack by the Heavenly Principles on the Purple Forbidden City. Therefore he was certainly not going to take any more medicine that he would later regret. One day later he despatched the Supervising Grand Minister of the Household Department, Sulenge, to

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pursue the foreigners to Liangxiang with instructions to present his compliments to the envoy and his deputies and explain that although because of their breaches of etiquette the proprieties had not been complied with, on recalling that their king lay ten thousand *li* distant, the emperor had relented and agreed that the envoys be treated considerately on their return journey.

At the end of the 16th century, Matteo Ricci translated the *Four Books* and introduced them to Europe and the majority of Europeans who had travelled east understood the concepts of 'conciliation to bring foreigners under control' and 'flexibility to cherish the dukes and princes when they are at a distance', simultaneously using soft and hard tactics to keep the tribes of the borderlands close to the court of the son of heaven. However the Qing emperor Kangxi already understood that the world had five continents and ten thousand countries, and that it was necessary to distinguish between barbarian tribes, vassal states and foreign countries in the west. It was also necessary to class the western countries as 'enemies' and deal with them on a reciprocal basis. Who could know that Kangxi's son and grandson, following the increasing stability of the Manchu Qing after taking control over the whole country, would return more and more to the mentality of false pride of successive emperors of the middle years of the defunct Ming dynasty? An obvious example is that the Jiaqing emperor clearly understood that Russia and Britain were both powerful enemies, yet continued to call himself the 'lord of all under heaven'.

Needless to say he was both deceiving himself and deceiving others. Jiaqing had no sooner expelled the Amherst Embassy than he bitterly regretted his impulsive actions. What is more he also issued a special form of imperial edict urgently ordering the Viceroy of the Liangguang, Jiang Youxian to convey personally to Amherst a message for the British monarch. According to the mediaeval tradition, this style of imperial edict was a specific document of admonishment. With these two forms of response to the British monarch's letter of credentials, was not Jiaqing treating the British as a vassal state? However this imperial edict, apart from a list enumerating gifts to be exchanged, also provided an explanation for the British embassy's refusal to carry out the kowtow and his unwillingness to receive them at the imperial palace, saying that 'the envoys were not sufficiently familiar with the customary ceremonials and proprieties of China, and more work was required on producing plausible formulae of speech. The implication is that if the emperor had understood earlier that Amherst and his deputies were not willing to present themselves at court according to Chinese ceremonials, it would have been possible to be tolerant, but he could not lose face to the ambassadors.

Jiang Youxian had submitted a confidential folded message saying that after the Amherst embassy arrived at Guangzhou he had arranged a banquet for

their departure, and requested that the emperor issue a further edict, 'proclaiming that this tribute mission and others, being at fault in lack of propriety, and ordering the king of that country to investigate and deal with the matter accordingly'. Clearly the implication was that the emperor was making amends for his hasty decision to expel the embassy. Surprisingly it also made the emperor nervous and tense and he swiftly issued a secret edict to stop it, acknowledging that when he had personally put out a statement blaming 'mediocre officials who were endangering the realm'.

Jiang Youxian, a Han Chinese bannerman of the Bordered Yellow Banner was said to be 'meticulous, agile, strong and intelligent' and during his tenure as Governor of Guangdong was especially noted for his skill in managing relations with Western diplomats. But in the secret edict, Jiaqing took great pains to lecture the governor on what words should be spoken from the chair and how they should be spoken when entertaining the 'officials bearing tribute'. Governors-general hd to repeat the lesson from the book, observe the edict in declaring openly that the British barbarians trading in Guangzhou, year after year brought great benefit to China and rebuffing British envoys, 'the benefit to China and their country of mutual trade is not merely for own calculations of gain'. [See *Guochao rou yuan ji* (*Records of the Dynasty's Graciousness to Strangers*) and *Qing shigao*].

What people find interesting is that, of course there was still a response from within the Amherst embassy. Sir George Staunton, the deputy ambassador, twenty three years previously when he was eleven years of age, because his father 'old Staunton' had acted as assistant on Macartney's expedition, he had learned Chinese en route to China with the expedition and had made a great impression when the embassy had been presented at Qianlong's court. At the age of 17 he travelled to Guangzhou to work for the East India Company branch there and rose through the ranks as secretary and interpreter to become the general manager or *taipan*. At the age of 35 in 1816 he was appointed deputy to Amherst by the British government. The Qing court had long been aware of this old China hand and had refused permission for him to accompany the embassy to Beijing. But he announced that he was only obeying the definite orders of the British monarch. The embassy travelled from Tianjin to Beijing via Tongzhou, tenaciously refusing the demands of Sulenge, Heshitai and others that they follow the protocol and perform the ritual [of kowtow], finally pleading illness to avoid the audience with the emperor, all of stemmed from Staunton's experience.

When the embassy was expelled from Beijing by Jiaqing even Amherst was dejected, but as the emperor sent officials to chase after them to 'conciliate' they were also given a ceremonial send off by Jiang Youxian, Staunton came

to the conclusion that the emperor, although threatening in manner, was cowardly at heart. Afterwards he wrote a letter to Amherst congratulating him, considering that Jiaqing's imperial edict 'indicated regret, and for an autocratic monarch this was much more than could have been expected'. In his letter he particularly emphasised countering the tactics of the Manchu Qing empire: 'submitting can only lead to humiliation, but provided that one is defending one's position reasonably, in a determined manner it is possible to win victory' [Peyrefitte *Collision of Two Civilisations*, p. 578].

That year the Qing court had not been able to prevent young Staunton from entering Beijing, and this was certainly a grave error. Twenty-three years later it was Staunton who facilitated the British launch of the Opium War against the Qing empire, seemingly bearing out his prediction.

12 May 2008, at night.

ESSAY 23

Napoleon Criticises the British

The previous chapter referred to Sir George Staunton the Deputy Ambassador of the two British embassies to China. The Qing Jiaqing emperor was at first furious at the refusal of the officials refusing to kowtow but later decided on 'conciliation of the barbarians' signifying Britain's first victory in gaining a powerful position in its relationship with China.

However the understanding of this issue by a French prisoner on the British-owned island of St Helena was quite the opposite. This individual was the former Emperor of France, Napoleon I, who had been sent in exile to this tiny island after his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo.

When the Amherst mission left China for its return to England, on 1 July 1817, it stopped over at the island of St Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean. Its members met Napoleon and recorded their conversations with him in their diaries. At the same time members of the Embassy entourage met Napoleon's Irish doctor and others have also left their own eyewitness records testimonies.

Alain Peyrefitte, the eminent French historian, politician and diplomat studied published and unpublished materials on Napoleon's reception of the Amherst embassy, and published a book in 1989 entitled *The Immobile Empire: Clash of Two Civilisations*. This included a chapter entitled 'Advice of a prisoner-of-war on the island of St. Helena' which contained detailed historical discussion of conversations during their meeting and Napoleon's preparation for it. Seventy years later Marquis Zeng Jize [eldest son of Zeng Guofan] published *China may be sleeping now but it will wake later* [*Zhongguo xian shui hou xing*], and in scholarly and political circles during the late Qing there was widespread publicity for Napoleon's analogy of China as the 'sleeping lion', along with it being the origin of the warning, 'when China awakes the world will be shaken'.

Ten years previously I read for the first time Alain Peyrefitte's *Immobile Empire* in the Chinese translation published by Sanlian in Hong Kong in 1983, and after that prepared to check the proofs of *China: the sleep and the waking* [*Zhongguo xian shui hou xing lun*] by Zeng Jize [1839–1890]. There had not been an earlier introduction to Zeng's use of that famous metaphor of Napoleon's in Chinese translations of the late Qing period. One reason is that a number of modern history treatises had committed elementary errors, suggesting that Napoleon's 'sleeping tiger' analogy had been in Macartney's speech, not knowing that Macartney had already died in 1806 after serving as governor of Cape Colony, and in that year had not even been acquainted with Emperor Napoleon galloping through the European War. Perhaps I am ignorant and ill-informed

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but until a few months ago I had not found any Chinese publication that had presented Napoleon's speech to Amherst until the publication of Zeng Jize in English in 1886; therefore I could only assume that Zeng Jize had been the first Chinese person to take note of this saying of Napoleon.

To prevent modern historians like us continuing to repeat such an erroneous statement, according to Chapter 85 of the Chinese translation of *Immobile Empire*, the discussions that Napoleon had with Amherst were as follows:

In March 1817, Napoleon calculated that Amherst would want to meet him on his way back to England, therefore he re-read records relating to the Macartney Embassy twenty three years previously. These indicated that on this occasion it was incorrect to assume that the British Cabinet did not want Amherst to obey the Chinese rituals: 'regardless of what a country's customs are, as long as the important personages of the government of that country observe them, it is not losing face for foreigners to comply when entering their territory. In Italy, one kisses the Pope's ring but this does not signify acting obsequiously. Amherst, bowing in the same way as Chinese officials, would not have lost status at all.[1]

The former French emperor criticised the Irish doctor in the retinue: 'You say that he (Amherst) was prepared to salute the Chinese emperor in a way similar to the way he would have saluted his own King but how can you insist that a Chinese person comply with the British protocol?" He even made the crude comparison: 'If the English custom were not to kiss the hand of the sovereign, but kiss his buttocks, would you also insist that the Chinese emperor remove his trousers?'

In the same month Napoleon said to the court physician: 'If I wanted to send a diplomatic envoy to China, I would instruct him to enquire of Chinese officials what the appropriate etiquette was in the presence of the emperor. If the Chinese proposed it I would allow him to follow the Chinese protocol, you [indicating the British] could, because of doing this kind of stupidity, have forfeited the friendship of the Chinese and many commercial benefits'.

On 1 July 1817, Napoleon received Amherst, according to Amherst's unpublished diary: 'discussions mainly involved four topics—my experience, China, the treatment I have received on the island and European politics'. 'He enquired about the situation when I was in Beijing, asked about the etiquette of the Tartars [ie. The kowtow], but he did not, as I had been prepared for, put forward any suggestions on my submission to this'.

Evidently Napoleon had greater diplomatic accomplishments than the British envoys, but after the event he made his criticisms of the Amherst

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1 The Chinese text has 'kiss the Pope's ass' but this would appear to be a mistranslation of the French confusing *âne* [ass or mule] with *anneau* [ring].

Embassy to the court physician: 'Your ministers foresaw that they might encounter difficulties with the protocol, therefore before sending Amherst there they agreed that he should respect the ways of that place. It seems that he personally considered that he ought to behave according to the local customs. He heeded incorrect advice and refused to comply.' In a previous essay I determined that because Amherst did not comply with the Chinese rituals he caused the expulsion of the embassy, it was in fact the decision of his deputy, Staunton, who regarded himself as an old China hand.

What is especially noteworthy is Napoleon's speech in which he attacked the ideas of the British court and people that China could be controlled through military force: 'To fight with this vast and prosperous empire is the greatest stupidity on earth'. You may possibly have success at first and you may capture their ships and smash their commerce. But you may also let them begin to understand their own strength. They may reflect and eventually say: by equipping ourselves by constructing ships and using cannon we can make ourselves as powerful as them. They can recruit gunners from France, America, even from London, build a fleet and eventually defeat you.'

That year when I read this quotation, I could not help being astonished: was this not precisely the logic of those famous officials of the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns of the Manchu Qing dynasty, Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang and especially Li Hongzhang? No wonder Zeng Jize of the next generation expressed so much admiration for Napoleon's views on China in his later years. I hurried to leaf through the *Collected Works of Napoleon* translated from the Russian edition. Claiming to draw on important materials in Napoleon's prison recollections from St. Helena, this Chinese edition (Shangwu Yinshuguan 1980) only selected military questions and there was not a word on Napoleon's criticism of Britain's ignorant and biased China policy. In 1980 during the high tide of the debate on 'truth as the standard' [led by Hu Yaobang under the new Deng Xiaoping regime] people did not pay attention to discussions of this importance on historical matters outside China. This calls to mind the struggles between reform and revolution in the late Qing period that had previously been criticised in scholarly circles, right up to the appearance in 1990 of the 'farewell to revolution' discourse. The discussions completely ignored Zhang Taiyan's (Zhang Binglin) 'Refutation of Kang Youwei's writings on Revolution' and other documents eulogising the historical rationality of the two saints Hua and Na (Washington *Huashengdun*) and Napoleon (*Napolun*). If we want to reread modern history can we continue to turn a deaf ear to Napoleon's understanding in former years as mentioned above?

14 May 2008, at night.

ESSAY 24

The Jiaqing Emperor and Napoleon

Tradition has it that Napoleon cautioned Europeans that China was a sleeping lion and that it was best not to alarm it. In my humble opinion it has not been possible to perceive this famous analogy from writings on the history of China's foreign relations, but I believe that Napoleon did say it. There are two pieces of evidence for this. The first is the French diplomat and contemporary of Napoleon, Chateaubriand (1768–1848), in his *Memoirs from Beyond the Grave* [*Mupan huyi lu*], who records that Napoleon in his later years from his exile till his death (1816?) on St. Helena always had at his side several faithful Chinese servants. Does this not reveal that Napoleon had some understanding of the far away Chinese empire? The second is Zeng Jize (1839–1890), the eminent late Qing diplomat, who in September 1886 (Guangxu 12) completed a career of eight years as ambassador in Britain and France. Before leaving London to return to China with the assistance of the Chinese diplomat, Halliday Macartney, he wrote in English *China: the sleep and the waking*. In early spring the following year he published two well known political essays in Britain and Hong Kong, that were obviously inspired by Napoleon, their aim being to demonstrate that China had been transformed from a 'sleeping lion' into a 'lion aroused'.

Zeng Jize recounted the previous history of 'soundly sleeping China', pointing out in particular the Qing court's governing style of 'letting fall robes and inaction', no doubt referring to what Qing historians refer to as the 'Jiaqing Daoguang conservatism'. His historical judgement can be discussed in another article, but since his history of the Napoleonic era is also a frame of reference for criticism of the Manchu monarch being 'intoxicated into a dream' at the same time, it also enables us to make a comparison between Jiaqing and Napoleon.

This kind of comparison had in fact already begun among the mass of theorists of 'revolution to expel the Manchus' and worship of Saints Washington and Napoleon during the late Qing such as Zhang Binglin and his journal *Chinese Quintessence* [*Guocui xuebao*] In the early nineties of the last century I wrote an article discussing the process of transition 'From Qianlong to Jiaqing', attempting to make a comparison between Jiaqing and Napoleon [for which see *Yinzhou weiding de chuantong* Liaoning Educational publishers 1995, pp. 148–150]. I said that: 'The European Powers, exhausted after the Napoleonic wars, finally banished Napoleon to a small island in the South Atlantic Ocean,

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and had a period of revival; they then discovered that the 'sleeping lion' in the east as described by Napoleon had not only not used this quarter century to bestir itself, but had become even more debilitated. Because a drug called opium was swiftly anaesthetising the organism of the 'sleeping lion'.'

Napoleon who came from an ordinary background in Corsica was recognised by the French National Convention in 1795 as he had showed remarkable ability at an early age. In the same year the Qianlong emperor chose his fifteenth son as crown prince and the Manchu Qing monarch abdicated. The fifth generation Manchu Qing emperor succeeded as the Jiaqing emperor. In 1799 the former Qianlong emperor, who had abdicated under the name of *Taishanghuang*, died and Jiajing began to rule in his own right, quickly launching a coup d'etat. In the name of opposing corruption he overthrew the faction of Heshen that had monopolised power and in the same year Napoleon in France became First Consul. What was novel about this was that the Jiaqing emperor after becoming ruler in his own right, grasped complete power in the richest and most powerful empire in the entire world and the promise of 'all should take part in modernaisation of renewal' was transformed into a cover for 'myself at the core'. In France, on the other side of the globe, although Napoleon also sought a dictatorship, he all along relied on the popular will. In 1802 Napoleon became the First Consul for life and, two years later, emperor, all though the votes of the citizenry, that is to say he turned a republic into an empire, became emperor and still respected popular opinion of the republic.

Napoleon carried out a 'restoration' of the monarchical system in France as if returning to the situation of King Louis in the eighteenth century. In fact Napoleon had inaugurated a new tradition in world history—naming the head of state emperor, president etc., all were simply titles. 'Names are the guests of reality' and what is really important is the structure. Napoleon sought a dictatorship, his individual motives may have been base or mean, but he was a product of the French Revolution, unconsciously playing the part of the executor of an unprecedented democratic revolution in European history [for the descendants of the deceased]. Even while moving towards monarchical dictatorship he constantly relied on the will of the people. By comparison the Manchu Qing Jiaqing emperor's monarchical power was paramount, but his control over finances was monopolised by the court and the civil service system had long ago stopped arguing with the emperor and his representatives. The military power that had supported the status of the Manchu conquest had been weakened by the corruption of the ineffective Eight Manchu banners and they still did not permit any encroachment by Han Chinese, especially those from the southern gentry.

It is not necessary to reiterate that the Manchu Qing Empire in the Jiaqing and Daoguang periods was still the wealthiest in the world. But the wealth of a nation does not necessarily equate to military strength and the quantity of troops maintained does not necessarily equate to quality. In the two eighteenth century reigns of Yongzheng and Qianlong, the level of national wealth reached the highest in the world. From the point of view of Napoleon, in general, national strength did equate to the wealth of the state and its corresponding ability to maintain military strength, requiring a high level concentration and monopolisation of state wealth. The Chinese Empire being 'fast asleep' was of course was favourable to the tendency of Europe with France as its centre to rise and dominate the world. His statement that it was best not to disturb this 'sleeping lion' of a Chinese Empire could stem from dread of China's latent capacity. But his nephew Napoleon III, obviously dared to dispute Indo-China with the Chinese Empire in the conflict between France and Prussia for European hegemony and invade the Chinese coastal areas of Fujian and Zhejiang, it is known that that the Europeans long cherished intentions of humiliating the 'sleeping lion' of the orient, only hoping that this 'sleeping lion' could be skinned and still not wake up.

The fifth generation Manchu emperor who took the reign name of Jiaqing died a quarter of a century after becoming emperor of China. Napoleon suffered a crushing defeat at Waterloo, but Jiaqing ruled for a further five years and his position was stable although he twice suffered assassination attempts or palace coups which were alarming but not fatal. Compared with Napoleon's career of great rise and great fall his reign can be considered extremely fortunate. But what was their historical legacy in the eastern and western hemispheres? Just the opposite of each other. The French Napoleonic Code created a universal social system under the rule of law, whereas the rule of the Jiaqing emperor made China, the richest nation in the world, internally extremely weak. After his death, his temple name which included the character *ren* 'benevolence' was satirised by so-called Confucians and Mencians because within twenty years the Chinese populace endured constant sacrifices because of the payment of indemnities and the ceding of territories by the Manchu rulers to the foreign invaders.

14 April 2008, at night.

ESSAY 25

Purchase of Office during the Manchu Qing Dynasty

The purchase of office has existed since ancient times in China. For example in the Western Han period, during the 'rule of the emperors Wen and Jing' that political historians generally eulogise, one of the superficial characteristics of the government was repeated promulgation of 'orders for the sale of noble titles'; wealthy individuals who contributed grain to the court 'acquired in this way respect and an office and were exempt from criminal sanctions' [*Hanshu*, *Shihuo* volume 1]. It is said that the modern *jinwen* text of the *Book of Shang* revised by Confucius already spoke of the emperor Shun of Yu ruling on 'gold to atone for crimes'. If officials had committed an offence they could make a payment in lieu of punishment, so it can be seen that selling office and making a payment in cash to atone for an offence was a special privilege of officials. The problem is that those without money had no means of enjoying such special privileges. As a counter-example, in the early 1st century BC, Sima Qian, who can be called the 'father of Chinese historiography', was imprisoned and sentenced to death because he had uttered some impartial words in defence of the role of General Li Ling in the defeat of the military expedition against the Xiongnu, which were taken by Emperor Han Wudi as ridiculing his orders to his generals as inappropriate [and passing blame onto the imperial brother-in-law]. His family was poor and did not have the money to atone for his crime so the price was that he was forced to suffer castration; he was thus the last of his line, but lived to complete his *magnum opus*, the *Historical Records* [*Shiji*]. After that in the history of systemic corruption in the dynasties of the middle ages, to use an ancient expression, it was a case of 'history is full of such instances'. However from the end of the two Han dynasties to the Yuan and Ming, even though there was no regime that was not brought down by political corruption and one of the systemic chronic diseases of political corruption was the handling by despotic monarchs of sale of official post and titles, long before there was a Manchu empire.

My first impression of these historical facts came from Volume 5 of Deng Zhicheng's *Two Thousand Years of Chinese History* [*Zhonghua erqiannian shi*] published over half a century ago. At that time I had just entered university to specialise in the study of history and Deng Zhicheng [1887–1960] was

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already seen as an old fogey in historical circles. I still recall his book being recommended by historians of China, the reason being simply that he had gathered together historical materials for a general introduction. That year I also read through part of Deng's celebrated work on Qing history and was greatly impressed by his narration of the Shunzhi, Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns of the Manchu Qing dynasty.

He offers interesting and unforgettable historical examples and there are hardly any explanations: 'Qing dynasty maladministration was at its worst in tax payments and this did not change throughout the entire dynasty. [In the Qing legal code] not a word is mentioned about this but other words are used to cover this taboo, [*Zhonghua erqianshi* Zhonghuashuju 1983 reprint, p. 88]. The historical material also includes examples of Kangxi period tax reports and tables of tax payments by genuine officials after the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods.

Before Deng's work Xu Daling had a specialist monograph *The Qing taxation system* [*Qingdai juanna zhidu*] but it had the defect of being too simple and lacking historical examples. After Deng's book, Qing historian's treatises on this aspect of Manchu Qing maladministration were either equivocal, only touched on the topic lightly, or—and this was often their natural instinct—did not raise it at all. Especially after the creation of the Chinese Republic, in research on modern history, to the best of my knowledge this proposition was not considered by most major writers.

Examining those earlier works shows that, as recorded in *Inside information from Daoguang Xianfeng official circles* [*Dao xian huanhai jianwenlu*], on 18 December 1848, over two months before his death, the Daoguang emperor who was the sixth Manchu monarch since the invasion of China in 1644 and was accorded the temple name of Xuanzong on his death and was also known posthumously as *Cheng huangdi*, summoned to court the Guizhou Governor or Financial Commission Zhang Jishen to transfer him (he had not yet taken up his appointment on the Gansu frontier). A high level order at this time stated: 'There are only four types who can be promoted to officials, Manchu, Han, graduates of the second and third class and purchasers of office. All careers have persons of talent and the ones about whom I have greatest concern are those who have bought their positions. They habitually do not read books and are always on the lookout to accrue interest on their capital. The words 'clean and honest' are really difficult to utter, I have said that to speak of purchase of office is not right, would it not be more exact to speak of opening a subscription list?'

Afterwards Zhang noted that it would be dishonest to pretend that his appointment was the same as in a normal selection process.

For the Daoguang emperor, the purchase of office was one of the four great sources of finance for Manchu Qing officialdom. Officials who had purchased their positions knew only how to 'accrue interest on their capital'. Those who had purchased their offices could not be converted into clean and honest officials and whether or not they filled real vacancies depended entirely on the level of their contribution to the finances of the court. On the question of purchase of office and appointments there were traditional precedents and emperors were well aware that 'officials by purchase were no good', but the system persisted and as of old people were deceived by this fraudulent practice. Many years before the Opium War, He Zizhen (1792–1841) launched an attack on the system of a subscription list, which was issued on the pretext of financial difficulties in his *Establishment of Provincial Administration in the Western Regions*, *Collected Works of Ding'an* (his *hao*); he argued that 'cutting off the buttocks to fatten the heart is still consuming one's own flesh'.

The Daoguang emperor's acknowledgment that the purchase of office was not good was simply self defence, completely evading the fact that purchase of office was an overt system of bribery, and the chief culprit was himself. In the official history of the Qianlong reign Qian Feng pointed out to the emperor that the senior officials of each province or border region 'use the payment as a tax or tribute for fame, and their avarice was insatiable', subsequently vowing to the emperor that they would not receive bribes. This is to say that the emperor was the bellwether in the common practice of bribery and corruption. Is it possible that the Daoguang emperor was ignorant of this quotation from his reign? In chapter five of the Ming Qing section of *Two thousand years of Chinese history* by Deng Zhicheng that was published in early 1955, he criticises the *Supplementary Precedents and Regulations of the Collected Statutes of the Qing Dynasty*, arguing that 'at the same time that not a word was mentioned about the purchase of office, neither was there any mention of the *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty* from the early Republican period which had a special section setting out this system, for which see chapter 112 'Selection of Officials'. The 'Basic Annals' and 'Biographies' sections in that book also refer constantly to the process of increasing financial contributions to the Qing court and controversies about the issue. At the beginning of the Republican period the government in Beijing established the Qing History Institute to revise the history of the Manchus for the 'victorious dynasty'. The majority of the members of the institute were diehards of the abdicated Qing regime, and

the *Draft History* that they compiled had the reek of orthodoxy, for example calling the Heavenly Kingdom of the Taiping a false dynasty. It was understandable that the Guomindang government refused to acknowledge that this was of an official history of the Qing dynasty, but it would be biased to deny its value to historiography or refuse to cite it as Deng Zhicheng had. This belongs to another topic which will not be discussed here.

11 July 2008, at night.

ESSAY 26

The Systematisation of Purchase of Office in the 'High Qing'

The systematisation of purchase of office in the Qing dynasty began in the reign of Kangxi, developed under Yongzheng and was firmly established under Qianlong. From 1669 (Kangxi 8) and this emperor's successful surprise attack on the Oboi clique, and following the thirteen year reign of his son, the Yongzheng emperor. to the first month of 1799, which was the fourth year of his reign of his grandson the Jiaqing emperor, the year of the death of the Qianlong emperor and the end of the autocratic period of the abdication, then this period of three generations of Manchu monarchs from grandfather to grandson, often characterised as the High Qing, stretched for 137 years, half of the total of the time after the Manchus took control of Beijing [in 1644]. Needless to say, up to the end of the 19th century, Manchu officialdom headed by the Empress Dowager Cixi, resolutely opposed 'self-reform' of the empire from the top downwards (see 'The monarch's dream: the ideological trend of self-reform in the late Qing' in my *Coming out of the Middle Ages* Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2008, pp. 54–59). The only reason was that 'the law of the forefathers cannot be altered', the forefathers being Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong of the High Qing and the unchangeable nature of the law of the forefathers included the systematisation of purchase of office as a form of taxation.

The origins of the Manchu Qing dynasty were in a military alliance of Manchu, Mongol and Han tribes in the border areas during the late Ming, passing from being semi-barbaric peoples subject to the laws of the jungle in the early period. After entering the passes they subdued the multiethnic territory by plunder and looting which they followed as a legitimate means of existence. It was only after repeated and long term opposition from cultures in the interior that it gradually evolved into 'civil government'. Military order was enforced by the garrisons of the Eight Manchu Banners or the Army of the Green Standard. A government was created by recalling to office officials of the defunct dynasty who had submitted and members of the 'evil gentry' to reconstruct control and order; this was seen as an example of 'the Qing following the Ming', which included the enlistment of talent though the imperial examination system.

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However inside Manchuria there were severe splits between masters and slaves which did not change until the demise of the Qing. The civil officials were slaves 'respecting the emperor and being close to the elite' and were not people of talent who were fair and just, upright and incorruptible. Therefore those such as Feng Quan who had fled the Ming, capitulated and had the trust of powerful officials in Manchuria were in the same category as corrupt bureaucrats of previous dynasties. Through this generation of nurturing and training, the Qing emperors and the hereditary aristocrats of the Eight Banners quickly learned the political trickery of 'civil administration', including the selection by examination and demotion and promotion of each grade of officials, all of which must be based on 'sacred imperial decisions'. The Shunzhi emperor is one example. Ten years after he began to rule in his own right, there were frequent cases of prison for infringements in the examination halls. The most serious of these was the 1657 case, which spread through the county examinations of five provinces and was an attack on the officials of southern China who had repeatedly opposed the Qing dynasty. The opportunity of irregularities and fraudulent practices in the examination halls was used to condemn to death the main and subsidiary examination supervisors of an examination hall in the south and all the eighteen candidates sitting the examinations, thus implicating many official families and thousands of new provincial graduates. Was this genuinely opposition to corruption? It was guaranteed to preserve the rigid and stereotypical late Ming system for recruiting officials with its attendant bribery and corruption; clearly it can be regarded as a system of selling official posts and titles for a despotic monarchy and Han officials were not permitted a share in this. Deng Zhicheng pointed out sarcastically: 'When the Qing entered the passes, they initially practised wastefulness and luxury and a culture of corruption was prevalent, 'rivers and territory', honour and rank' were all used as bribes, [*Two Thousand Years of Chinese History*]. Although this is only superficial, it does accord with historical reality.

If it can be said that the Qing emperor Shizu (Shunzhi) dying at the age of just 24, was really still only practicing how to trade money and power, his son the Kangxi emperor transformed this with the *juanban* system for the purchase of positions, and was worthy of the name Shengzu, 'sage ancestor', his sagacity being that his wisdom in commerce exceeded that of the masses. The Kangxi emperor in his bones did not have confidence in Han Chinese officials and in his discussions with powerful bannermen always referred to Han officials as *manzi*, a common term for southerners which has the connotation of 'rough and uncivilised', even blurting out 'there is not even one good uncouth southerner' [see 'Current events of the present dynasty' Li Guangdi *Rongcun*

xu yulu (*More utterances from a Fujian village*). He also particularly liked to commend the Qing dynasty's incorruptible officials among whom were many Han Chinese, because he knew that the powerful nobles of the Eight Banners who relied on the special privileges that they retained as a result of the conquest had already sunk into wholesale corruption and, relatively speaking, the 'uncouth southerners' who had emerged from the imperial examination system, even if they were hypocrites, compared with the sons and younger brothers of the Eight Banners eating the rice of their forefathers, had the ability to be officials and could serve as the vanguard in 'using the Han to control the Han' [see Zhu Weizheng *Zouchu zhongshiji* (Coming out of the Middle Ages), Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2007, pp. 205–217].

Kangxi was on the throne for 61 years in all and in addition to natural disasters such as droughts and earthquakes and the widespread flooding of the Yellow and the Huai Rivers, there was also the Three Feudatories Revolt, unrest in Taiwan and on the coast, and troubles with the Muslims in Xinjiang and elsewhere. Dealing with disasters, flood control and deploying troops all required funds and food, and this meant a shortfall in the treasury. Whenever there were natural and man-made disasters, they were always golden opportunities for venal officials to feather their nests by embezzling relief funds. Kangxi was after all wise and far-sighted, on the one hand continuously threatening to penalise corruption, but on the other hand opening up avenues for buying office. In 1674 (Kangxi 13), in order to build up funds for the conscription of troops to put down the Three Feudatories Rising, he instituted not only the *wenguan juan* (civil official contribution) system, which was essentially the sale of positions such as tribute supervisor, the equivalent of a higher degree and the granting of hereditary ranks, which were 'regulations already in force', but also added the sale of substantive civilian posts of metropolitan officials below the level of senior secretary or department head, officials outside the capital below the level of circuit intendant, all of which could be purchased with silver. These were termed 'temporary regulations', suggesting that these measures were expedient and would expire at the end of the emergency. No-one was to know that what this autocratic system of government was most afraid of was breaking 'regulations'.

The *Da Qing Huidian fu shilie* that was revised many times from the Shunzhi to the Guangxu period and the 'regulations' of various departments explain these regulations. If the emperor took the lead in breaking the rules, the implication was that it was a modification of the old law and that it was possible temporarily to transform this into the 'ancestral way'. There were more and more 'temporary regulations' for the acquisition of office or status by making

a contribution in taxes during the Kangxi reign period, thus creating multifarious ways of purchasing office, to the extent that those officials who did so were simply regarded as having reached the same position by different routes, and were able to compete for substantive posts or lucrative sinecures with those who had passed the examinations and arrived in office in the orthodox way. This will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

The Yongzheng emperor had a reputation for ruthlessness and jealousy. His criteria for appointing offiicals suited his own autocratic style, although in employing officials for the imperial court he also followed the precedent of using more Manchu and Han officials who had emerged by the so called orthodox route. Feudal senior officials such as the three Governors-General Silin-gioro Ortai (1677–1745), Tian Wenjing (1662–1732) and Li Wei were examples. Li Wei was originally a commoner from Tongshan in Jiangsu and had no titles but made his name by subscribing capital to purchase the office of secretary second class to one of the Boards. Tian Wenjing's origins were that of a Han bannerman who paid to obtain office. Ortai was a Manchu graduate of the imperial examinations at the provincial level, the elementary level of the orthodox path, and without subscribing capital to gain the unorthodox status of discussant [*yixu*] he would never have been able to have attained the rank of circuit supervisor [*jiansi*] and then proceed to that of governor. They were all seen by the Yongzheng emperor as most able to accept being lackeys who answered to the master's call, 'like hounds and falcons to a whistle'. They also embodied the 'sacred imperial desire' and were the opposite of the sanctimonious and hypocritical bureaucrats, successful in the examinations, whom the emperor detested.

In 1727, the fifth year of Yongzheng's reign, the emperor by demoting and dismissing brothers [*chixiong chudi*] and slaughtering those implicated with his 'successful dogs' (Nian Gengyao, Longkodo) had established himself firmly on the dragon throne. However he was faced with widespread rumours among the public in the provinces, that he had been guilty of parricide to seize power and he was anxious to restore popular feeling. Apart from concocting the *Da juemi lu* [*Record of Resolving Confusion by Great Righteousness*, an extended defence of the legitimacy of the rule of Yongzheng and the Manchu ruling house in general], he paid a great deal of attention to the choice of his governors and other senior provincial officials. His yardstick was 'those who used bribery and cheating' [*shitan shizha*] above all were officials who had purchased their offices. This type of person had become an official through trading power for money and was willing to risk their capital after becoming an official. Moreover on becoming an official and wishing to seek an increase

in their capital they might curry favour with the emperor to advance in office. Therefore no morality or high moral principles were involved; it was only necessary to guess the emperor's intentions. As far as the Yongzheng emperor was concerned, as long as popular feeling was calm and stable, corruption or fraud did not matter. His politics of secretive communcations and system of special agents allowed him to have at his fingertips the private lives of central and local officials; naturally those like Tian Wenjing and Liu Wei also provided contrary intelligence reports to dupe the emperor. The emperor and officials constantly deceived each other and as a result the Yongzheng emperor issued an edict on the indispensability of purchase of office. [Yongzheng 5 edict *Qingshi gao juan* 112 *Xuanju* book 7]. The purchase of office was already in existence to deal with famine relief, river conservancy works, and military requirements, according to 'temporary regulations'. It was an established rule that, in the selection of local officials, equal attention should be paid to recruitment through the examination system. It is hardly necessary to say that this sacred edict was immediately implemented in the civil service system at the imperial court.

In 1736, the first year of the reign of the Qianlong emperor, there was an imperial mandate to end the purchase of office and it seemed as if the 'heavenly father' had become insane. However some Han officials submitted a memorial to the emperor praising this action of the new emperor in 'reversing the verdicts' and saying that it was not thorough enough. This provoked the anger of the emperor as they posted of lists of successful candidates who had 'shifted from filial piety to loyalty' How could he be willing to shoulder the responsibility of a reputation for not respecting the heavenly law of the ancestors? Even more, how could he appoint full time hereditary officials of the Eight Banners and Han and Manchu examinations graduates, thus abandoning the real benefit of exchanging money for power in accordance with traditions handed down since the Qin and Han periods? Heaven and man confuse what is appropriate and after Qianlong had ascended the throne, natural and man-made disasters occurred one after another. Constant popular uprisings caused by internal and frontier officials gave the emperor sufficient reason to restore and strengthen the 'temporary' purchase of office and titles. Including the three years of a fake abdication, the Qianlong emperor's dictatorship lasted for 63 years and four months and created the longest period of recorded monarchical autocracy in the dynasties of the middle ages. Not surprisingly his court or government followed precedents on the sale of office and titles that had been set by previous ancestral emperors and standardised them into over-elaborate formalised and detailed laws and institutions for the sale of office, systematising the process. His descendants extended for five centuries as six emperors and some, like

the Daoguang emperor, were misled, exclaiming that ‘purchase of office is not good’, but even if after Xianfeng and his little concubine Cixi together twice broke the record of losing their capital city, the Manchu Qing ruling elite still only thought of patching up the old regulations which is not surprising. What is surprising was that, one hundred years after the passing of the Qing, our researches on Qing or modern history still lack any methodical analysis of the process of systemising the purchase of office under the Manchu Qing.

17 July 2008.

ESSAY 27

'Varieties' of Purchase of Office

I can still recall that when I first arrived in Shanghai ten years ago I often heard Shanghai people use the expression *huayang jing*. With the passing of time I began to realise that it indicated playing tricks or causing mischief but I did not understand the origin of the phrase. Because my family's native place was also in the Wu dialect area, I had seldom heard *huayang* as a set phrase. It was not until much later, after I had studied history for many years and had reading many official and unofficial histories of the Manchu Qing dynasty, that I came to understand that *huayang* was simply Suzhou Wuxi or Ningbo dialect and was taken directly from an idiom common in Beijing's Manchu Qing official circles.

According to the *Qingshi gao* Examination System Book 7, Purchase of Office section:

> Officials in this class, whether their positions have been purchased or not, contribute a certain amount of capital, so that the order of precedence of classes is made clear and it is possible to fill vacancies more quickly. This is called *huayang*—variety or playing tricks.

Officials who had purchased their offices had, of course, simply handed over money in exchange for their positions. As the text quoted explains, shortly after the Manchu Qing had 'entered the passes' to take control of China, they were already following the system that had obtained during the late Ming dynasty, which permitted Han people to pay silver or grain in exchange for the official rank of tribute student or hereditary noble status for their relatives. But by paying the government in money or in grain, it was possible to buy central government posts below the level of director or deputy director, middle and lower level substantive civil local government post below the level of circuit intendants, lower level assistant directors.

In 1674 [Kangxi 13] at the time of the outbreak of the Three Feudatories revolt there were what at the time were referred to as temporary measures. Military expenses for the civil war increased suddenly, the dykes on the Yellow River and Huai River were breached, resulting in the transport of southern grain to the north being stopped. After drought, excessive rain and earthquakes, famished refugees swarmed throughout the land. If relief had not been

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made available there would have been serioius danger of insurrection, therefore the Qing court turned more and more to the system of payment of office.

Compared with the Ming dynasty, the Manchu Qing were inclined to explain the law in terms of precedent, but the Kangxi emperor and his descendants sought to concentrate power in the person of the sovereign. The emperor took the lead in breaking precedents; on his command the law was changed and temporary provisions were transformed into the law of the ancestors. This is the key to understanding how the conservatism of the Qing dynasty maintained the upper hand.

The purchase of office variations coincided with 'inaugurating civil service contributions' in 1674 (Kangxi 13) and caused controversy at court. What was interesting was that both sides in the controversy were honest and upright officials commended by the emperor. Initially the Chinese bannerman Yu Chenglong did his utmost to attack the 'Manchu and Han ministers' who sold official positions, but he caused the downfall of, and replaced, another Chinese bannermen, the Director of the Yellow River Conservancy Jin Fu. It was then discovered that Yu's programme for water conservancy and flood control was illusory, and moreover that there had been such long standing abuse of water conservancy policies that they could not be resolved. He therefore changed tack and made a great speech, arguing that the problems with water conservancy were problems with funding and that the way out was necessarily to take 'temporary measures' and thus allow more officials to purchase appointments. His loss of bearings fired up the minor but honest official Lu Longqi, who considered that the purchase of office 'obstructed the orthodox path' and if officials by purchase who relied on their wealth increased contributions to ensure preference in the award of substantive appointments, then those graduated with the *jinshi* degree in the normal way or 'orthodox path' officials who had long been qualified with the *gongshen* 'senior licentiate' degree might not come forward. 'The more there are of those who take precedence for employment the more there are to cause harm to the people', an alarmist statement that angered Yu Chenglong. He occupied a high official position as President of the Censorate and was Lu Longqi's immediate superior, and 'to oppose him was a capital crime'. Fortunately the emperor pardoned Lu as a junior and unintelligent official who did not understand what was going on and had been misled. [see the biography of Lu in *Qingshi liezhuan* and Li Guangdi *Rongcun xu yulu* (*More utterances from a Fujian village*].

At that time the Kangxi emperor [a Manchu] was studying Chinese culture, in spite of being faced with factional struggles within the court between Manchus and Hans and northerners and southerners. A dispute over whether the existence of Han banners and Han officials who had bought office had

departed from the rigid adherence to principle was refered to as a 'little risk to Han people but highest evil'. By the middle years of his rule, Kangxi had clearly dismissed Tang Bin, Xiong Cili and others as 'false Confucian pedantic scholars' and then had Gao Shiqi, Xu Ganxue, Wang Hongxu and other Chinese banner officials driven out of court as sycophantic courtiers; the only one he had confidence in was Li Guangdi, who was personally loyal to the sovereign, probably because he remained true to the proprieties of officialdom. Because he had opened up the purchase of office, he said to Li Guangdi, 'the purchase of office does not have great benefits, once you dispense with [contributions of] money and grain then you arrive at a figure of over 30,000,000 taels; unless you value highly money and grain, would it not be better not to dispense with it?' Li Guangdi of course praised the august wisdom of the emperor but in private ridiculed him, suggesting that the emperor did not appreciate the importance of money and grain earned from such purchases, compared with the amount from taxing the people at large. He also argued that even those who had entered the civil service through the examinations system needed money to take the examinations and that this was a 'hidden purchase of office'. It must be said that Li Guangdi saw through the contradictions in Kangxi's deluding himself and others, wanting the sale of office to be considered an unfair means of accumulating wealth and also wanting to ingratiate himself with the common people. However this does not necessarily indicate that he was himself a double dealer. He pandered to the emperor to his face and unscrupulously criticised him behind his back, even to the extent of saying that the system of purchase of office only brought loss of prestige to the state. However this individual, through his toadying and flattery and passing off the fraudulent as genuine, became untouchable in Kangxi's political circle in the middle and later years of his reign.

Meanwhile from Kangxi to the two reigns of his sixth generation descendant Tongzhi and Guangxu there were 'variations' or 'mischief' in the purchase of office. The historical facts can be seen in *Qingshi Gao* and specifically in the *Qingshi Gao* Examinations Book 7. Set out below are the new varieties of purchase of office, many of which can be detected in all the reign periods from Kangxi to Xianfeng. This shows that the buying and selling of official positions (not including such cases as scholarly official honours, nominal titles, or the granting of hereditary rank) was such a thriving business. It is not possible here to annotate and explain one by one the various types of 'variations'.

The purchase of office in the Qing dynasty will be mentioned again later but at this point there are some points that in my humble opinion it would not hurt to mention.

Firstly, purchase of office was a significant source of income for the Qing imperial bureaucratic system and, by the late Qing, it can be said to have been the main source. Secondly, from, at the latest the middle years of Kangxi, the descendants of the Manchu Eight Banners had already turned into a parasitic caste and the selection of officials by examination was incapable of creating a competent bureaucracy that could hold together the imperial system. There was no option but to draw on talent by unorthodox routes outside the hereditary and examination systems. Thirdly, hampered by tradition and the 'ancestral system', the Manchu Qing in seeking talent through unorthodox routes could only seek help from the mediaeval market mechanism, namely the exchange of power for money. Fourthly, the start and end points for successive Qing emperors' practicing the sale and purchase of office were the alleviation or relief of the financial problems that resulted from natural and man-made disasters. The purpose was not really to seek out talent, but perhaps the Yongzheng emperor was an exception in this. Fifthly, as a result of this, by the late Qing, individuals in the general populace who possessed both scholarship and ability—still the majority—despised the purchase of office and vastly preferred to seek an orthodox career path. The history of this mentality has not yet been properly studied. Sixth, purchase of office in the Qing dynasty, includes frequent donations, including donations for scholarly official honours, nominal titles, promotions, mention in records and the granting of hereditary rank. Large donations could be camouflaged as relief for people in stricken areas, water conservancy, military supplies etc, setting precedents for actual official donations; those who made formal donations to provide capital were mainly local tyrants and wealthy merchants or officials who were either in post or had been removed from office, invariably the terms being that they were exchanging their contributions for power or authority. Seventh, purchase of office in the Qing dynasty had become a synonym for corrupt bureaucracy, even though officials who had advanced in the orthodox manner or had been forced to contribute money to fill a vacancy could not but bitterly vilify the purchase of office system. Eight, the system of purchasing office that ran through the entire Qing dynasty, and gradually became mainstream, at the latest in the latter years of Qianlong, had already become the mechanism by which the Manchu Qing empire would commit suicide.

19 July 2008.

ESSAY 28

The Promotion of Purchasing Office

Even in ancient times there was sales promotion of commodities. Of course promoting the sale of official titles and positions could not only produce direct sales, it could also offer discounts and, when official faction members paid a visit, door to door sales and compulsory sales, as in a fantastic story that appeared in the Xianfeng reign of the Qing dynasty.

This fantastic tale appeared in the late Qing in an annalistic *biji*, the *Louwang yongyu ji* (*Records of a Gasping Fish Escaping from the Net*), written by an ordinary man from Changshu. The author's surname was Ke, his given name cannot be determined for certain but he signed himself as the Old Man Late to Awaken [*wuchi laoren* and is therefore often listed as Ke Wuchi]. From internal evidence it appears that this person was still living in 1877 [Guangxu 3] when he was 'nearly seventy' and that he was born in the middle of the Jiaqing reign period, lived all his life in what during the Qing dynasty was Hengjiang township, Changshu county (but is now Taicang county in Jiangsu Province), studying but without achieving any scholarly honour or official rank. According to Shao Xunzheng he was, a 'low to middling landowner and petty trader' [see the first edition of that book published by Zhonghua shudian in 1959]. Students of the history of the Taiping Rebellion attach considerable importance to this book. Pardon me for an ill-informed opinion but until now I have not come across students of modern history who pay attention to the real records that it contains about the trouble caused by the purchase of office in the Daoguang and Xianfeng periods of the Qing dynasty.

By the Daoguang and Xianfeng reigns the purchase of office had long been systematised, but this was a corrupt mechanism that led to the Great Qing Empire heading towards suicide. It was a process that permeated from top to bottom and from the outside to the inside, but in the public and private records of the Qing dynasty there are rarely any systematic reactions to it and especially there is a lack of observations or impressions from those harmed by it at the lower level. *Louwang yongyu ji* can therefore be said to be of considerable value in this respect.

The author, Ke whoever-he-was, obviously kept a regular diary and the narrative in the book generally records, accurately and precisely, the year, month, day and time of entries, including the weather and the solar period. For example early in the Xianfeng reign the Jiangnan region repeatedly suffered earthquakes, droughts and plagues of locusts. Rocketing prices of every

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type of commodity, and the inferior quality of the newly cast copper coinage, 'Xianfeng *tongbao*' currency, led to the populace of Jiangnan who were involved in trade declaring loudly 'no new Xianfeng', suchlike things being considered by the people to be portents of approaching catastrophes.

This Old Man Late to Awaken narrates matters corresponding to what is recorded in the various books on astronomy, portents of disasters etc in the *Qingshi gao*; these not only coincide exactly but are more specific. Therefore it can be understood that his impressions or observations, although superficial, do conform to historical reality. At that period in rural Jiangnan, unimportant people, who had read 'what the poems say and what Confucius said' were all rather concerned about, or interested in, the great affairs of state and Ke whatever-his-name-was was also in this category. For example he recorded the two opium wars of the Daoguang and Xianfeng periods, sympathised with Lin Zexu, loathed Qishan; hated the 'English barbarians' but also had no confidence in the great feudal officials who were loyal to the sovereign or the state. That knowledge and insight came from hearsay, rumour and gossip and he believed in rumours and confused the two attacks on Tianjin by joint English and French forces and the burning down of the Yuanmingyuan Summer Palace, but from this it is possible to see public opinion among the ordinary people at the time; this is by no means the wooden manner in which several modern historians have described their perception of the imperial destiny.

It goes without saying that this Ke, whoever-he-was, was indeed 'late-awakening'. Jiangnan society in the Xianfeng period that he records, was associated with natural and man-made disasters, but he suggests that the fundamental reasons were, 'in a word, the suppression of revolts in the land proceed from money, transport of grain by water, salt, examination—the four laws of administration' [op. cit. Xianfeng 2 edition]. As long as there is the emperor's wisdom and brilliance, bringing about the stability of currency, a fair system of grain taxation, honest fixing of the salt price and reorganisation of the examination system, then it is possible for all under heaven to be transformed from great chaos into great order. This was the philistine or vulgar view of politics taken by both the Manchu Qing court and the public: the model, 'using history as a mirror', was the novel *Sanguo yanyi*, (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*). Even the emperor believed that in ruling his empire he was wise and farsighted so it is perhaps understandable that mere common people from the poor and remote counties of Jiangnan such as Changshu and Hengjing (near Suzhou) reaching the age of 70 might not have been awoken to this kind of traditional bias.

But this old Jiangnan peasant (according to Confucius's definition) was still wiser and more brilliant than the silk-clad emperor lording it over the dragon

court because he had personally experienced 'the four essentials of government: money, grain transport, salt and examinations'. In the Daoguang and Xianfeng reign periods these had already become a 'great commerce' in the sale and purchase of office and honour. In 'rectifying deviations and correcting errors', the effects of measures carried out among the populace, increased fraud and could only lead to rebellion.

Needless to say that the historical and social effect of the reform of money, transport of grain and salt business (three of the essentials of government) are recounted in *Records of a Gasping Fish Escaping from the Net*, but this book also touched on examination system and purchase of office.

That is to say that the Jiangxu Provincial Director of Education examination administrator, Li Huang, during three years in the post travelled on the Changzhou circuit to supervise the examinations, because he had the power and authority over demotions and promotions of county and provincial graduates. His son issued a message that whoever wished to succeed in being classified as excellent grade county graduate on a government stipend, wished not to be lowered a grade, or even additional county-level graduates of the second class and licentiates of the first degree could acquire the status of a salaried graduate, the quoted price being 700 yuan in silver dollars. At the door of the examination hall, there was a 40 percent discount: '300 yuan was also possible'.

In 1852 (Xianfeng 2),

> The most loathsome was the example of the previous Director of Education (Li Huang). Qing Lin (a Manchu of the Plain Bordered Banner) had been appointed Director of Education in Jiangsu in 1848. Each examination was a mountain of jade. Changshu's Xi Meisheng was the go-between and the collusion was prepared thoroughly. In advance the necessary payment was 500 in foreign currency (Mexican 'eagle' dollars); closer to the time of the examination, 300 would suffice and anyone could take part in these conversations; by the time the doors of the examination cells were sealed, he would condescend to accept 200 in 'dark green water beetles'.

The 'dark green water beetles' refers to standard copper coins [and a legend that claims that coins smeared with the blood of the mother beetle and its young will eventually find each other], each string would have 1000 cash. According to this source it is recorded that in the first year of Xianfeng, this was the 'equivalent to 1470 or 1480 copper cash'. The Jiangsu Director of Education Qing Lin was appointed to two terms of office and in each session of the third

level examinations, selecting *xiucai* from among the students eligible to compete, the fixed price was 500 silver dollars, but by the time they go to closing the doors of the examination rooms, those who wanted to enter and guarantee that they would be selected to pass the examination the price had a discount to 60 %. At the end of the Qing dynasty the examination system was abolished.

The market system for paying to pass examinations dates back to the ancestors in the early years of the Qing dynasty. *The Scholars* [*Rulin waishi*], published not long after the beginning of the reign of the Qing Qianlong emperor, Gaozong, depicts the history of the rise in fame and fortune of a superman of ruffian background from Yueqing in Wenzhou. This uncommon man was from a destitute family background but loved to read the eight legged essays and other forms of examination essays, happened to be recognised by a district magistrate and became a *shengyuan* (*xiucai*) graduate. He went to Hangzhou where he sought refuge in the Zhejiang provincial treasurer's office (*yamen*) where he served as head constable and jailer. He slandered his teacher Ma Er and transformed himself into someone from a 'chosen family' and then threw off poverty to arrive at wealth by following the lifestyle of the gang leader Pan San, breaking the law but playing with legal phraseology. The key to all this was the time he spent serving as exam substitute sitting in the place of the *xiucai*. The author of *The Scholars*, Wu Jingzi, was very much this kind of extraordinary individual, but might not expect that, a hundred years after his death, the Great Qing system would be as it previously had been and that degeneracy would have been added to the attitude of scholars.

Records of a Gasping Fish Escaping from the Net also confirms that even as late as the Daoguang and Xianfeng periods, if one wanted to discard the white garments of a commoner and exchange them for the blue gown of a *xiucai* or even the cap and gown of a provincial graduate *juren*, senior licentiate *gongsheng* or the black gauze cap and round neck style official robes of the Imperial Academician *guozi jiansheng*, not only was it unnecessary for a servant or employee to enter the examination hall to sit the examination in your place, it was not even necessary to remain quietly at home and send someone with a scholarly honour or official rank to the gates of the hall. You might as well just plagiarise and copy out a few original texts.

At that time Changshu was divided into two counties, one Changshu, the other Zhaowen; in districts under the jurisdiction of the two counties there were posted official notices, first quoting the edict of the Xianfeng emperor, followed by explanatory notes on 'officials and gentry public information'. The note asked: do you wish the glory of obtaining official titles, wearing the hat or peacock feather decorations of an official? If you pay out then you can have your wishes fulfilled. Have you got misgivings about the choice of silver, rice

or other cereals, copper cash or [Mexican] silver dollars? There is no need to take it to heart you just have to make the conversion, all can be recognised as contributions, the government merely asks the amount of the contribution, the more money is converted, the greater the official post given.

In the second month of Xianfeng 4, the Governor-General and Governor and the Provincial Treasurer of Jiangsu put out a notice: The Grand Secretariat issued a blank inspection document and each county was issued with ten sheets initially, so that for the literati and the people the price was reduced to 9 or 10 silver taels, with miscellaneous expenses of 3 or 4 taels. For ordinary people who wished to buy an Imperial Academician diploma, the permit fee and procedural fee could be greatly reduced, and for each document they could save over 10 silver taels, if they paid in copper cash, depending on the exchange rate or cash to silver.

In the third month of Xianfeng 5 (1855):

> Since the occupation of Nanjing, there has been mobilisation and conscription everywhere. The necessary supplies for the military were of necessity requisitioned from the general population. Those who wished could convert their tax receipts and send silver in lieu of tax grain and those who overpaid for the purchase of honours could buy a receipt for the tax grain, whether these were merely notional appointments or substantive posts; in this way hereditary appointments could be assigned in an instant, bringing honour to the family so that its name was not sullied by unsuitable occupations. Blank documents for the certificate of the licentiate degree by purchase were available for cash whether or not the recipient had committed any crimes or transgressions.

That is to say that, on 29 March 1853, after the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom established their capital in Jiangning [part of present day Nanjing] and changed the name to Heavenly Capital (*Tianjing*), the Qing court, in order to raise even more funds for the expenses of the civil war, wantonly sold official titles and positions. All that was necessary was to provide funds and all kinds of nominal titles, substantive appointments, glorious hereditary noble titles for one's wife and family, that brought honour to one's ancestors could be obtained as easily as spittle in the hand.

What were the effects of this? According to the conditions recorded in Changshu by this Ke, on the one hand:

> If the gentry and wealthy families were already overflowing with gratitude, even if they were still children in swaddling clothes they could get

> awards. If their families had blots on their escutcheons, those who made several donations, unexpectedly appeared dressed as gentry.

On the other hand, when there was 'alarm at the sound of the wind and the cry of the crane, those who levied taxes and advised on contributions' all hid and those who rewarded contributions disappeared'.

Manchu Qing government officials were obliged to play dead as leading officials of provinces, prefectures and counties continuously issued official proclamations; threatening, luring by promise of gain or even imploring, at the same time tolerating or permitting 'military supplies bureau directors, moving through the counties to advise contributions', 'going from house to house to extort people to sign up, and when they go through the gate it is as if they are transformed into Buddhist monks begging for alms, if you do not comply with the amount they demand as a contribution it is as bad as playing with snakes'.

Such 'enforced contributions', of course led to concerns about the prices of the purchase of office. In the Manchu Qing dynasty there were regular contributions such as those for senior licentiate [*gongsheng*], first degree graduate [*jiansheng*], carrying the official cap on the head [*dingdai*], honourable mention [*jiaji*], mentioned in reports or minutes [*jilű*] etc with their different price tags clearly marked, but the prices were different in different dynasties and reign periods and the price differentials for contributions by officials for substantive posts were even greater from period to period.

Generally speaking, at times of peace it was just a question of filling vacancies in substantive posts and prices were high, but at times of turmoil or for contributions for nominal posts, prices were low. However like the low prices for purchase of office in the Xianfeng period, before the Daoguang reign [1820–50] it was seldom heard of. *Records of a Gasping Fish Escaping from the Net* records the prices for purchase of office in 1856 (Xianfeng 6), apart from saying that among the people 'the new Xianfeng [currency] was not wanted. In the capital paper money was already in circulation.

From the entire book it can be seen that this Ke whoever-he-is had probably 'eaten bitterness', borne the hardships of local officials dropping in to exhort contributions and his criticisms of the purchase of office are fascinating:

> At present if an official career is obstructed, purchase of office is the short cut, the run of the mill man crowds or throngs, the worthy or virtuous man retires, and what is the reason for this? There are too many scholars and they are too poor. They are ambitious but incapable of playing the sycophant or currying favour so purchase of office is firmly established

> and enriching, filial piety and the respect due to superiors penetrate everywhere as those who obtaining an appointment to a vacant post do their utmost to succeed. Officials do not sympathise with or understand lesser people as they should be loyal unto death to the affairs of the state.

And so on and so on: can it be said that this is not in agreement with the realities of late Qing history?

26 July 2008 at night.

ESSAY 29

The Buying and Selling of Office in Fiction

Fiction is not history. In the history of modern literature, under the pretext of talking about history, the product called 'hanging up a sheep's head to sell dog meat', trying to fathom out the 'sacred meaning' of proclaimed writers, can be found everywhere. However fiction can provide material for investigating history. Even though under the name of historical novels they pretend to talk about history to fool people, for example the type of historical novel in which the Manchu Qing dynasty emperors who strictly enforced personal dictatorships or autocratic regimes, the father and son Yongzheng and Qianlong, are both written up as wise and brilliant monarchs. Depending on the writing environment and the writer's angle it might be possible to to investigate or pry into the cultural ecology of 'the dregs of society' that was denounced by Lu Xun.

Speaking of conjecture or fathoming out brings us inevitably to *The Scholars* [*Rulin waishi*]. This novel, probably completed in the middle of the eighteenth century, looked back on the history of the examination system in the previous dynasty, the Ming, and the culture and structure of the three successive Manchu Qing reigns of the emperors Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong. The exposure and satire of the writing has long since found universal praise and been discussed by many people. My old article '*Ma Chunshang yu kuang chaoren*' [republished in *Zouchu Zhongshiji*, *Coming out of the Middle Ages*, Fudan University Press, 2007], also seems to have been able to provide some thoughts on research on this book. Here there is no harm in recalling my summary of the Chapter 49 of that book.

Wu Jingzi loathed the examination system in the extreme. In this chapter he wrote 'Gao, a Hanlin official, discourses on the dragon and tiger list of successful candidates for the degree of *juren*', finding an excuse to mock the language of the retired Hanlin Academy assistant reader [*shidu*], expressing his detestation of the eight-legged model essays. This Hanlin Academician by the name of Gao looked down on Ma Chunshan (Ma Erxian), the compiler of eight legged essays for examinations who enjoyed great fame in the forest of scholars, because the bogus clerk to the Grand Secretariat, Wan Li, that is Wan Qingyun, flatters and compliments to his face his 'great work' as a provincial graduate, saying that 'all people in our humble province have studied it thoroughly', and then taking the opportunity to malign him, saying to Grand Secretariat Secretary Wan, 'Respected sir, those two characters 'to fathom

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out' are the golden acupuncture needle to this whole profession. In the three modest pieces of my provincial examinations [for the selection of *juren* from *xiucai*] there is not one sentence that is original, each and every character has antecedents, a past history, and that is why I succeeded by sheer fluke. If one is not aware of 'fathoming out', even if one is a sage one will not hit the target. Mr Ma has talked about examination essays for half a lifetime but what he has taught is not enough for success in the profession. If he had understood the two characters 'fathoming out' then there is no telling what official he would have become. [*Rulin waishi* Hong Kong: Zhonghua Shuju p. 481].

At the beginning of the Qing dynasty reign of Qianlong, there were no official titles greater than Grand Secretary or official positions more senior than Grand Councillor. It is evident that to be able to become this kind of high official, it was essential to be proficient in those two characters, 'fathoming out'. Wu Jingzi died in 1754 (Qing Qianlong 19) and therefore could not have seen the process by which Yu Minzhong and Heshen rose to positions of power, but he was aware of how Han Chinese officials of the like of Zhang Tingyu became adept at 'fathoming out' the 'sacred imperial will' in Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns and did not fall from the political arena. His exposure of 'fathoming out' certainly came out as the 'golden needle of the profession'.

But reading this and the following two chapters of *The Scholars*, the deepest impression left is how Grand Secretariat Wan was transformed from fake into genuine.

The Grand Secretariat kept changing at the beginning of the Qing dynasty, if there was some constancy it was that the officials of the Grand Secretariat who drafted imperial edicts or mandates, promulgated central documents from the centre, and collated or assembled memorials to the emperor from the provinces were all linked to the Palace secretary and clerks in the Grand Secretariat. The Grand Council was established as the Military Affairs Office [*Junjichu*] at the beginning of the Yongzheng reigns but Qianlong systematised or regularised it and from then on the Grand Secretary had practically no function to perform. But the senior officials of the Grand Council were tied in the same way to the Manchu, Mongol and Han secretaries who were attached to the Grand Council. The Manchu language secretaries were originally officials belonging to the heads of the Eight Banners, but by the Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong reign periods the names had already become generally used for assistants in different departments of the court, like subsequent heads of offices or their secretaries. The Yongzheng emperor established the Grand Council and by imperial order employed senior officials to exercise the authority of and replace the Grand Secretary. However the Grand Councillors could not possibly see to everything personally. Therefore it was necessary to select

subordinate officials to assist the Grand Council assistants, and from among the section heads who remained Grand Secretariat clerks or secretaries. This type of Grand Secretariat clerk or secretary was merely at the level of principal and assistant eighth grade and they were originally lowly people, but when they stretched out their hand you felt the heat. Even though they were among the lineup of candidates of clerks and secretaries of the Grand Secretariat, they also became the object of competitive fawning and currying favour by officials and gentry. Therefore they also became popular with those purchasing office.

The Scholars describes how 'the Grand Secretariat clerk feigns and usurps the phoenix pool [an allusion to the centre of power close to the Wei and Jin emperors]', in a total of three chapters (49–51) that are brief but brilliant.

[In *The Scholars* Wan claims to have been a secretary of the Imperial Patent Office]

Wan Li's style [*zi*] was Qingyun: he was from Taizhou and had been struck off the list of licentiates [*shengyuan*].

> It was only because my family had fallen on hard times and I had no alternative that I drifted from place to place. If I had said that I had the *xiucai* degree of a licentiate I would have starved. By saying that I was a secretary in the Grand Secretariat, the merchants and the local gentry were willing to look after me.

This was the self-justification of the fake imperial secretary to his saviour Feng Mingqi.

Feng Mingqi, who people called Fourth Brother Feng, was conceived by Wu Jingzi as a genuine chivalrous character, skilled at martial arts, who delighted in championing the oppressed, in the lower reaches of society he had great prestige, and did not pay any attention to the 'king's law', [that is the law of the land]. He deliberately made trouble for the system of purchase of office, forcing the Hanlin academician, Gao, and the genuine Imperial Patent Office secretary, Qin, to protect official salaries, taking out 1200 *liang* of pure silver so that Wan Li could purchase his office and become a genuine imperial secretary. We have therefore learned: firstly, in the early part of the Yongzheng reign, even the posts of confidential secretaries of the Grand Secretariat or the Grand Council could be attained by purchase; secondly, the 'secretaries' of the emperor at that time had not necessarily genuinely come through the examination system, but as long as they were able to write a good hand and were adept at comprehending the 'sacred intentions of the emperor', then they could succeed in being selected for appointment; thirdly, of course potential

officials waiting for a vacancy at the level of secretary that they could fill also had to make a financial contribution, otherwise how could they acquire the imperial circle drawn around their name and be included in the ranks of the 'ushers' [*xuban*]. From the reign of Qianlong onwards, the Secretaries of the Grand Secretariat [*neige zhongshu*], were selected mainly from among the provincial graduates [*juren*] who had failed in the metropolitan examinations [*huishi luodi*]; among them there was no lack of individuals possessed of outstanding literary talent, therefore they became the main source of secretaries for the Grand Council (Council of State) [*junji zhangjing*]. However, as Wu Jingzi has described, at the beginning of the Qianlong reign, the positions of Secretaries of the Grand Secretariat [*neige zhongshu*] had similarly all become the object of trade on the market in official posts. Someone who had been removed from the list of licentiates [*shengyuan*], by expending the sum of 1200 *liang* of silver, could be transformed from a fake Secretary to a genuine one, negotiating with the Board of Civil Office and having his name recorded in the Grand Secretariat as a candidate for a vacancy, later being able to take part in important and confidential matters of state as a probationary Grand Councillor [*junjiqu xingzou*]. Was that not a symptom of government by bribery in the Manchu Qing empire from an early stage?

As has been shown previously, the Qing Daoguang emperor had already referred to the four great sources of the imperial bureaucracy, and purchase of office and the examination system existed side by side. The distinguishing feature of institutionalised corruption in the Manchu Qing was the purchase of honours and offices, without exception from top to bottom, in the court and the provinces, from Han and Manchu. By the time of the Hundred Days reform in the Guangxu reign of the late Qing period, a special decree of the emperor amalgamated high officials of the fourth rank with the four secretaries of the Grand Council in the new government. Yang Rui was one of the Grand Secretariat secretaries who had passed the examination for *juren*; Liu Guangdi was from a *jinshen* background and had been Secretary of the Board of Punishments; Tan Sitong first purchased office as a county magistrate and then for an increased contribution became an official in waiting [*houbu*] and a Prefect; Lin Xu fell into the category of those who had failed in the metropolitan examinations [*huishi luodi*] but paid a fine to become a Secretary of the Grand Secretariat. After the coup d'état staged by Cixi there were still protest memorials to the emperor by the Censor Yang Shenxiu, and again in the early Tongzhi reign with *juren* paying a fine to become Board of Punishment staff Supernumerary Officials *wailang*. The majority of these senior officials had risen by the route of purchase of office. This indicates clearly that among those

who had purchased office there were 'gentlemen', men or virtue and character [*junzi*], but does it not also disprove the argument that purchase of office had corroded the entire imperial bureaucratic system? The degree of relation of this process of corruption to purchase of office up to the present day still remains a weak link in researches on Qing, or perhaps one should say modern, history.

24 July 2008, night.

ESSAY 30

Honest Officials and the Purchase of Office

The honest official was not just a feature of the Manchu Qing dynasty. Everybody, high or low, from monarch to subject, approved of the honest official, and that was a historical characteristic of the Manchu Qing.

Anyone who has a slight general knowledge of the history of the middle ages knows that the commendation of honest and clean officials began in the two Han dynasties and is also aware that, after this, in succeeding dynasties the main yardstick for honest and clean officials was enforcing the law impartially, also to abide scrupulously by the law of the land while in office. The origins of Ming Taizu [the first emperor of the Ming dynasty who reigned under the title Hongwu] were as the leader of a band of beggars and he specially abominated 'those who had money so they could always get people to do things for them': once he came to power he was extremely severe with relatives and with the people and officials of their prefectures and counties and he laid down a cruel punishment [tortures] for 'corrupt officials who peeled off the skin'. That method was flaying alive avaricious and corrupt officials of the prefecture and county; the whole skin that was removed was then filled with dried grass so that it was in the form of a human body to set an example, and hung it in a 'skinning ground temple' at the yamen gate as a warning to future lords and masters. This method was extremely brutal and of course it was both effective and ineffective. Fundamentally it was ineffective as not only did corrupt officials emerge in large numbers afterwards, it was even more impossible to prevent the increased flourishing of habits of corruption among eunuch cliques. *Eunuchs of the Ming Dynasty* [*Mingdai huanguan*] by the Qing writer Zhao Yi (see *Reading Notes from Twenty* [*Four?*] *Histories*) had already focussed on the exposure of this corruption, but one manifestation of its effectiveness was guiding the people to deify honest officials, such as the Song man Bao Zheng and Hai Rui of the Ming dynasty, who were praised among the people as 'clear blue sky' sea-green incorruptibles and fashionable from the Ming into the Qing period. However officials in post overcharged to supplement their incomes and the honest and clean, the incorruptible, restrain or regulate themselves, even to the extent of dying in post with their pockets empty, such as the late Ming Grand Secretaries, Xu Guangqi [1562–1633] and Zheng Wei. The emperor favoured them excessively and equally appraised them positively as guardians of the 'civilised, the culture or the refined'. That is to say that right up to the beginning of the 17th century, in general public opinion still considered that

civil officials ought to be honest and incorruptible and the practices of taking and offering bribes were considered to be an anomaly.

Two generations after the Manchu Qing had entered the passes to take Beijing, the Kangxi emperor continuously commended incorruptible officials. After 61 years on the throne he issued a decree that there should be no more than ten model honest officials so it can be seen that at that time honest officials had already become rare animals. Moreover, of the honest officials who achieved the approval of Kangxi, there was only one from the descendants of the Eight Banners, and regardless of whether they were Han Chinese bannermen of the Bordered Yellow Banner who were hereditary servants of the Manchus, it was certain that among the Manchu ruling race honest officials were already a species of endangered animal on the brink of extinction.

The Chinese bannerman Yu Chenglong [1638–1700], whose style was Zhenjia; received the hereditary rank of Imperial College Student [*yinsheng*] and the post of magistrate [of Leting in Zhili] by virtue of his adoptive father's service. It is not clear how he became appreciated like the Shanxi man of the same name, Yu Chenglong [a contemporary but twenty-one years his junior, 1617–1684]. That former Ming senior licentiate [*fugong*] Yu Chenglong, after making a political recantation and conceding victory to the Qing, pledged his allegiance to the Kangxi emperor, took part in the pacification of the Three Feudatories rebellion, fought with all his strength against the capital of the Ming Zheng Chenggong, and was named as Number One Honest Official by Kangxi. Yu Chenglong awaited the arrival of Kangxi on his southern tour, waited upon him and served him slavishly and the emperor took great pleasure in praising him.

He was promoted and also obtained a general edict from the emperor to the high officials and descendants of the Eight Banners, upholding him as a model provincial official for the bannermen to emulate, and presently he would overtake the awards given to the governor of Zhili (see *Qingshi gao*, 'Biography of Yu Chenglong'). That gentleman indeed did not fail the honest name; as governor he attacked governors, saying to Kangxi: 'All of the officials under heaven have been 'sold out', there is none at the rank of governor or provincial treasurer who has not acquired the position with a cash purchase. Seeing that the emperor was astounded, he said in a loud voice that it was an age-old malpractice among provincial treasurers and that the purchase of office was 'essentially buying the emperor's offices with the emperor's cash'. Naturally the emperor asked, 'Who is buying', and he answered 'It is not only the Manchu and Han Grand Councillors [prime ministers, chancellors], there are also others'. In 1686 (Kangxi 25) the Grand Secretaries of that reign, Mingju

and Yu Guozhu and others had only recently been dismissed from office. Yu Chenglong's official career prospered from this point onwards but he also became more and more deeply bogged down in the factional struggles in court in the middle years of the Kangxi reign.

But the 'contribution' of the Chinese bannerman, Yu Chenglong, to the Manchu Qing system of government was more as an honest official, yet the Manchu rulers were spurred on to systematise the purchase of office. In the *Qingshi liezhuan* [*Collected biographies in the Qing History*] this matter can be seen in many places, but after the death of Li Guangdi, in the *Rongcun xu yulu* (*More utterances from a Fujian village*) compiled by his unenlightened and ignorant descendants, and in which were collected the private and unpublished records of his internal [*neibu*] conversations, in the three books of 'current affairs of the present dynasty [*benchao shishi*] there is much to reveal the historical reality.

Li Guangdi, the man from Anxi in Fujian province, cannot be considered to have been a venerable old gentleman in the Kangxi reign period. The secrets of his success in courting the favour of the emperor and achieving important positions were: firstly a nimble brain and being good at spying out the sacred imperial will; secondly his speed at changing direction, as long as he had received the sacred imperial regard by fair means or foul it would be done; thirdly he was meticulous in dodging out of the way, in all of the factional conflicts at court between Manchu and Han and central and provincial officials, he seized the opportunity to reap the benefits at the expense of others and left some leeway to extricate himself in the case of unforeseen circumstances. Through his spying he became aware that the Kangxi emperor was studying Western mathematics and calendar with missionaries from Europe, and therefore he had Mei Wending [1633–1721, writer on astronomy and mathematics] brought to his house, and fabricated a treatise on the Chinese origins of Western studies. When he learned that the Kangxi emperor was interested in commending Zhu Xi's school of philosophy as a way of using the Han to control the Han, he immediately publicised the *Book of Changes* [*Zhouyi* or *Yijing*], Confucius, Mencius, Cheng Hao and Zhu Xi as the highest form of philosophy for governing the ways of the world, the manners and morals of the time] and the hearts of men. He even slandered his teacher, Xiong Cili [1635–1709] in front of the emperor, saying that he had, like Zhao Gao [who died 207 BC and was the legendary corrupt, villainous and probably eunuch adviser to the Qin dynasty emperor,], 'called a deer a horse', that is he had deliberately misrepresented matters for ulterior purposes. When he secretly assisted the Chinese bannerman, Yu Chenglong, to attack the faction of Mingju, he then discovered that this individual was a powerful master of the sale of office, and said to

the emperor, 'those who have purchased office all say that it is advantageous, those who have studied independently [of purchase] say to the contrary'. This resulted in him being called to account in public by the emperor, as if he had already changed into a 'false Confucian' so the collaboration of Yu Chenglong and Xiong Cili was exposed, (op. cit. *Rongcun xu yulu* (*More utterances from a Fujian village*) book 14).

From this it can be understood that in 1691 (Kangxi 30), Yu Chenglong and Lu Longji were busy exposing each other's past misdeeds. The two of them were honest officials commended by the emperor. Lu Longji closely followed his Zhejiang fellow provincial Lu Liuliang [1629–83] in seeing Zhu Xi as the highest peak of the tradition of Confucius and Mencius; he served as county magistrate for fifteen years and had made a name for himself among both officials and the common people, and was given the post of censor. As the Kangxi emperor personally led a military expedition against Galdan, three new openings for 'purchase of office' were created for the military expenditure required. In the same office there was a censor of the same rank of 7th degree who proposed that officials by purchase could, by increasing their contribution 'without guaranteed recommendation', take up an office but not receive supervision from superiors; they could also 'increase their contribution and be promoted in advance of what was due to them' and were not subject to the annual restrictions that applied to those who had come up through the examination route. Lu Longji was somewhat resentful and, in a memorial to the emperor, argued that, 'if it is possible to make a contribution to avoid the 'without guaranteed recommendation' status, this is not different from the orthodox route, and moreover the honest and incorruptible can pay in order to obtain it. He did not know that these methods of encouraging purchase of admission into official life was in fact a proposal by the Chinese bannerman Yu Chenglong, while he was Governor-General and in charge of the Yellow River Conservancy. This official was now appointed President of the Censorate, which meant that he was Lu Longji's highest superior. How could he condone his subordinate striking up a discordant harmony? Because of his behaviour the meetings of nine chief ministers condemned Lu for 'delaying military requirement' and decided that he should be dismissed from office and banished to a distant region or obliged to enlist in the army. Fortunately the emperor had discovered that the Censorate were 'Yu Chenglong's running dogs' and said that Lu Longji 'had not been an official for long and was not officially scrutinising these matters' so he was able to avoid banishment. *Rongcun xu yulu* (*More utterances from a Fujian village*) op. cit. book 14 and *Qingshi gao* book 265 and passim).

Yu Chenglong and Lu Longji were both known as honest officials in the Qing period. The two were Censors who had the special privilege of speaking to the emperor. However the topics of their debates was whether or not official positions should be sold because of financial difficulties, and besides, whether, in the sale and purchase of office to fill vacancies, preference should be given to those who had come up via the examination system. According to the Manchu Qing legal code, it was of course Lu Longji who was in the right. However the winner was in fact the Chinese bannerman Yu Chenglong. Could it be that this person really could transform the heart and mind of the monarch? Otherwise, as Li Guangdi said, at that time the Kangxi emperor had already mastered the evidence of secret collaboration between Yu Cenglong and Xiong Cili, and expressed doubts about the argument that all those who opposed purchase of office were false Confucians. But this Chinese bannerman was also able to give an explanation in his own defence, seeing that Xiong Cili, with a confidential letter sent by the emperor to Gao Shiqi, only uttered one sentence, 'I really do not know how these southern barbarians do things' (*Rongcun xu yulu* (*More utterances from a Fujian village*) op. cit.). The question returns to the issue of preserving the political system of 'Manchus inside and Han Chinese outside', how could the great Manchu rulers not consider that opposition to the sale of offices was a secret plot of the Han Chinese officials?

18 July 2008, at night.

ESSAY 31

Bao Shichen's on Accumulated Wealth (*Shuochu*)

In the first sixty years of the 19th century, during the three reigns of the Manchu Qing emperors Jiaqing, Daoguang and Xianfeng, China was hard pressed by both disorder within and aggression from abroad, but this also stimulated continual petitions for reform.

In the past, modern historians have mostly taken the starting point for late Qing reforms as the writings of Gong Zizhen [1792–41] and Wei Yuan, who were members of the proselytising Changzhou school of New Text literary studies. This theory was strongly promoted by Liang Qichao at the end of the Qing dynasty and the beginning of the Republic and it seemed as if it had already become universal or common knowledge. Wei Yuan's political views and his study of the classics were mixed up together, but for the moment let us not discuss this. However Gong Zizhen's first pleas to the Manchu Qing rulers for 'self reform' [*zi gaige*] were seen in Jiaqing 20 (1815–16) in the set of essays that he wrote entitled *Views set out on the cusp of 1815 and 1816* (*Yibing zhi ji zhuyi*); at that time he had not yet been in contact with the so called Changzhou school classical scholars, Liu Fenglu and Song Xiangfeng.

In reality there were already traces of pleading with the Qing court for 'self reform' and planning a feasible programme. Before Gong Zizhen there was Bao Shichen, and after Gong Zizhen there was Feng Guifen. From the point of view of the locus of the history of the ideological trends of late Qing reform, Bao Shichen, Gong Zizhen and Feng Guifen can be said to have been the three characteristic thinkers of the Jiaqing, Daoguang and Xianfeng reigns respectively.

As for Gong Zizhen's theory of self-reform, I have already discussed this on a number of occasions so it is unnecessary to say more at present. Here, I intend to say a few words about Bao Shichen's *On Accumulated Wealth* (*Shuochu*).

Bao Shichen (1775–1855) was from Jingxian county in Anhui and was also known by his style of Shenbo. In his young days because his family was poor he sold vegetables and taught in a private village school but at the same time he educated himself in the ancient and modern books on the art of war and history. In 1797, the 2nd year of the Jiaqing reign, he appeared before the governor of Anhui, Zhu Gui, so that he could explain in detail how the government ought to strive to 'not compel people but order them, not be anxious about people but compel them'. The master of giving orders was convinced and from that time onwards Bao's name and his actions became the talk of the town. However he was disgraced by trying to take advantage of his closeness

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to power to seek to obtain scholarly rank or official honour, the result was that he competed six times in the provincial examinations and did not achieve the rank of *juren* until he was 34 *sui*; subsequently he took the metropolitan examinations thirteen times but failed to gain a higher degree. Only by the time he had exceeded the cycle of sixty years did he take the examination for former graduates who have failed three times at the metropolitan examination and progress from *juren*. He was selected to be sent to Jiangxi where he filled the vacancy of magistrate in Xinyu, then encountered bitter battles between officials within the province. Within a year he had been dismissed from office, and was investigated together with officials charged with corruption and suffered for three years. An Imperial Commissioner sent by imperial decree to judge the case exclaimed in admiration, 'The gentleman, Bao, an official as honourable as the sky is blue, has resided among 17 dogs: that he has managed to avoid capital punishment is fortunate indeed'. At the age of seventy he published a selection of his own writings in a volume entitled *Four Types from Anhui and Jiangsu* [*An wu sizhong*]. However for the reason that it was 'extensive in scope and such a collection that it is not possible to distribute it', the first part of *On Accumulated Wealth* was deleted. Tradition has it that when the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom established their capital at Tianjing [in present day Nanjing], Hong Xiuquan honoured him as one of the 'three ancients'. He died at the age of 81.

According to the first preface of *On Accumulated Wealth*, this book was written in 1801 (Jiaqing 6): Bao Shichen was 27 *sui* at the time and had written the two volumes, each in 40 thousand characters, to educate his 14 year old pupil Yao Chengqian and help him to understand 'the essentials for the pressing needs of the times'. In the previous four years the White Lotus rebellion had spread from Hubei and Henan towards Anhui. He contributed *Drilling village troops in response* (*Lian xiangbing dui*) which was highly thought of by Zhu Gui. He continued to travel around as a propagandist to the major political and military officials of the provinces of Sichuan and Hubei, saying that to counter the poor people who were obliged to assemble and rebel, firstly it was necessary to be reasonable and secondly not cause them trouble. He everywhere ran up against a stone wall and that is why he wrote *On Accumulated Wealth*.

The wealthy are those who have stored up reserves. Zhu Gui had praised Bao Shichen as being a 'rare talent', a genius like Jia Yi [the poet reformer and statesman] of the Han dynasty. Bao Shichen also prided himself on putting his work forward as the contemporary equivalent of Jia Yi's *Programme for the management of peace* (*Zhi an ce*). However his *On Accumulated Wealth*, even though it avoided using phrasing such as 'long great sigh' and 'so bitter', to prick

the nerves of the Jiaqing monarch and his officials, and to strive to stand on the standpoint of the powerful to work out a scheme for 'the art of governing people', yet it is as if he is burning with anger.

How is this? At the very beginning of *On Accumulated Wealth*, there is a quotation 'the words of the former sage [Confucius]', professing that there were four types of state [*guo*]: 'the kingly state with a wealthy population, the tyrant's state with wealthy gentry, the state that barely exists with wealthy ministers, and the dying state with rich granaries and treasuries'. It then goes on to criticise 'those today' with destitute people, impoverished officials and depleted resources, and the three councillors of state and nine ministers] councillors of state, ministers and relatives of the imperial family by marriage who are 'not willing temporarily to change the wisdom of their resourcefulness in gaining private advantage from public funds'. Are they not clearly part of the 'barely existing state' of their day? Therefore the writer considers that the key to 'what is new under heaven' lies in 'setting up a court for judging officials'.

The court for judging officials is an old name. The Northern Song dynasty established two such courts, the east and the west, which dealt respectively with the examination and selection of civil and military officials, and after Wang Anshi's institutional reforms this was changed to reunite them and revert to a Board of Civil Office *libu*. The Office for Inspection of Officials proposed by Bao Shichen was not one based on the old Northern Song model. On the contrary, according to *On Accumulated Wealth* it should have the authority to exercise control over the examinations for, and promotions and dismissals of, all civil and military officials, whether central or provincial. There are a number of points worth considering:

1) nowhere in the proposal is the Grand Council mentioned; in fact it recommends that superior to the Office for Inspection there should be two assistant ministers, one each from the left and right offices of the Grand Secretariat 'of full grade one rank to manage the governance of the state, both civil and military', that it to say a restoration of the four hundred year old combined administration of monarch and minister that had been abolished by Ming Taizu;
2) the position of the 'central officials', Imperial bodyguard commander and Beijing garrison commander advocated in the proposals was that their authority over personnel should also be determined by the Office for Inspection, which was equivalent to demanding that the Imperial Household, the Grand Chamberlain and the Commander of the Nine Gates of the capital be deprived of their special privileges;

3) in the proposal it is strongly advocated that regional governors-general, governors and circuit intendants be dissolved, and that provincial treasurers and district magistrates could all be put in charge of military units and that the commanders of temporary garrisons should also be appointed by the Office for Inspection.

The flourishing gentry society of the period from the Tang and Song to the Ming and Qing participated in a gambling style of 'promotion schemes', using the casting of oracle bones to foretell the fortunes of officialdom, indicating clearly that to be an official was a kind of speculative career and also indicates that in general gentry did not believe in the so-called ancestral teachings of Confucianism, 'study and thus be favoured in becoming an official'. Who would have expected that as long ago as in the early years of the 19th century a *shengyuan* from Anhui province would thoroughly deny the traditional ideas of Confucian teaching, drawing up a blueprint for the ways in which an ideal government would choose its officials on the basis of open, impartial and equitable principles? According to plans envisaged by the young Bao Shichen, the selection of officials should be by equal opportunities for all and what he proposed was wide opportunities for airing views, so that expounding views on political issues in speech and writing was not confined to those from a background of the correct qualifications and experience. There should be no limit on the matters that could be discussed and there should be no such thing as penalties for 'complaining to the higher authorities over the head of the magistrate's yamen' [*yueya shanggao*], on the contrary each level of official must protect the freedom to express opinions, including being qualified appropriate speakers for preliminary hearings of the Office for Inspecting Officials to supply travelling expenses for those selected to go to the capital for re-examination. Qualifications for re-examination and classifying and assigning jobs according to abilities should all be done by officials currently in post. If the preliminary hearings are of no use the original examination scripts should immediately be returned with thanks; for failures in the examination, the travelling expenses for returning home should be paid. If there is corrupt practice or plagiarism this should be punished according to the law.

Is this not the Utopian system familiar to modern people? But this was actually from the hands of a young Chinese man two hundred and eight years ago. Perhaps Bao Shichen was shocked at the presumption of his own audacity, which all his life he only showed towards his most intimate friends. *On Accumulated Wealth* was added during the Jiaqing period to the *Collected Works of Bao Shichen* (*Bao Shichen quanji*, Huangshan Press 1991. Bao Shichen's

successors, Gong Zizhen, Feng Guifen and suchlike did not produc such succinct arguments for reform but after his death they proclaimed publicly that the first book of *On Accumulated Wealth* was 'a celebrated hidden mountain' but it was not published until the end of the Qing when it appeared in *Guocui xuebao* [*Chinese Quintessence*. In a 1903 (Guangxu 29) comment, Liu Shipei, who at that time called himself the 'number one militant' praised this book's essential ideas that were 'rather similar to the Occidental constitutional system'.

A similar admirer was Liao Yihui, a renowned cultural conservative at the beginning of the Republican era. In 1936 (Republic 25) he came across fragments of *On Accumulated Wealth* spread out on the stall of a street vendor. In the top margin, at the top of the pages there were annotations by Zhou Ji and Shen Qinhan and he hastily handed them over to the Jiangsu Provincial Library and had them printed in facsimile and published, subsequently adding a long postscript, criticising the corrupt dictatorship of the Guomindang

On Accumulated Wealth has passed through a *kalpa* of a hundred years from the late Qing to the Republic, and through the hands of well-known literary and historical figures with different value judgements but it would still repay further study.

26 March 2009, before dawn.

PART 4

The History of Opium



ESSAY 32

Opium from Medicine to Narcotic

Although the first chapter of textbooks on the modern history of China is always about the Qing dynasty being defeated by the British in the Opium Wars, it usually lacks the necessary introduction to the history of the spread or dissemination of opium in China. Righteous indignation cannot be a substitute for science, merely denouncing the pernicious influence of opium makes it very difficult to explain clearly how opium became the narcotic that exacerbated the process of corruption of the Manchu Qing dynasty.

The *Bencao gangmu* which was compiled in 1578, the 6th year of the Wanli reign of the Ming dynasty includes a section on grains and medicines, 'Li Shizhen says: Opium in former times was rarely heard of, but now there are people who use it, Yunnan is the saliva, the body fluid [a Chinese medicine term] of the opium poppy flowers'. In fact, as an analgesic, as early as the Kaicheng reign of the Tang emperor Wenzong (836–40), opium [which was also written with characters suggesting and Arab origin] was on sale in herbal medicine shops. Li Shizhen, the court physician, obviously did not know that the opium poppy was originally produced in Central Asia, and that its congealed delicate juice, sap or liquor had probably penetrated China through trade between Byzantium and the Tang dynasty. However when he said 'but now there are people who use it', at least these were as medical cases, and after he died (in 1593) the Wanli emperor, who had become so overweight that he had difficulty moving, possibly became habituated to opium pills after he had contracted gout.

However combining opium with tobacco and smoking it in a pipe, commonly called 'drawing opium' in Chinese [*chou yapian yan*] must have been transmitted to the Far East by the Spaniards following the North American Indian custom of smoking tobacco in pipes. According to Frederic Wakeman, this kind of method of smoking narcotics was discovered by the Taiwanese in 1620 (the first years of Ming Taichang) (see Chinese translation of *Cambridge History of China: Late Qing* Chinese academy of Social Sciences Press, 1985, Volume 1, page 183).

Tobacco from the Americas arrived in China during the middle years of the Ming dynasty and the habit of smoking quickly became established, to the extent that in the Jiajing and Wanli reign periods Wang Shizhen exclaimed that, 'boys only three feet tall are all smoking!' However, strange to say, even

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though many people from Taiwan were migrants from Fujian and Guangdong, in 1683, the 22nd year of the reign of the Qing emperor Kangxi, the regime of Cheng Chenggong (Koxinga) on Taiwan was subjugated and the ban on maritime trade lifted, it seems that the practice of smoking opium only spread slowly on the mainland. By 1729, the 7th year of the Qing reign of Yongzheng, three generations of Manchu emperors had issued edicts banning the use of opium by the people, which shows that opium had already been transformed from a medicine into a narcotic.

The spread of opium smoking as a narcotic in China, come to think of it, was also a problem brewing up for the Manchu rulers. In fact the father and son, Kangxi and Yongzheng, both prohibited tobacco, as they were concerned about the health of officials and people, and because there was conflict over land for planting tobacco and planting grain for food. Not only did it obstruct or hinder the collection of taxes, it was also possible that areas sown with tobacco lacked grain and therefore there could be popular risings. Was this effective? In the almost two hundred years from the late Ming to the early Qing, under the name of 'Guizhou or high class tobacco and smoking paraphernalia', silk-trousered fops and playboy children of the gentry and merchants of the southeast, vying to show off their wealth, suddenly discovered the method of drawing in opium smoke invented in Taiwan. It was novel and more stimulating, and it was also legal to import the 'foreign medicine', so was it easy for it to compete with opium paste and opium paraphernalia?

European and American merchants who had for a long time suffered the disadvantage of using silver in exchange for Chinese silks, porcelain, tea and other fine products, discovered that a market for narcotics had emerged in China and was growing by the day, how could they not grab the commercial opportunity? Marx's *History of the Opium Trade*, published in 1858, had investigated the chieftains of the British East India Company, how they had struggled with Portuguese traders for this market for opium transported from Turkey to China, compelled Bengali peasants to switch to planting opium, and striven to monopolise the private trade in opium with China. In 1796, the first year of the Qing reign of Jiaqing, the Qianlong emperor, who had formally abdicated, once again advocated banning the import of opium, but the effect was not as intended and this stimulated the smuggling in opium in which central and provincial (native and foreign) officials and merchants colluded. In 1834 (Daoguang 14), when the East India Company lost its monopoly of trading with China, the smuggling of opium switched to the hands of private enterprises. American and other narcotic traders also spared no effort to compete. As a result, within three years, the opium smuggled into China increased tenfold.

As this all indicates, China was a silver-poor country. However from 1436 (Ming dynasty Zhengtong 1) a bimetal currency system with silver as the basis was implemented, the silver that was required for the circulation of commodities and the income of the national exchequer came mainly from the foreign silver drawn in from the agricultural products export trade. Quan Hansheng [the noted economic historian] has researched this in detail, and has shown that in the two and a half centuries from Ming Longqing 5 to Qing Daoguang 6 (1571–1821) it was only silver from the Americas exported by the Spanish, and worth approximately 400 million dollars, at least half of which found its way into China, so that by the end of the Ming dynasty a Spanish naval official cried out in shock or alarm, 'the Chinese emperor is able to use silver bars to build a palace!'. (Quan *Ming Qing jingjishi yanjiu* Taibei: Lianjing, 1987)

As the trade in smuggled opium became more and more rampant, leading to the Manchu Qing empire becoming the richest in the world in silver, there was a change in the direction of flow from inwards to outwards. In 1838, the 18th year of the Daoguang reign, a memorial to the emperor by Huang Juezi, Chief Minister for Ceremonials, asking for the prohibition on smoking opium, gave the Daoguang emperor a pretext for opium prohibition:

Because of the flow of opium into China, before the Daoguang period, millions of silver taels leaked out each year. Initially only the silk trousered fops and playboy children overindulged but this then spread upwards to officials and the gentry and downwards to artisans and merchants, superior and inferior, and then to women and Buddhist and Daoist monks, nuns and priests, who all joined in the smoking. The disloyal merchants in Guangdong province colluded with low-ranking military officers and soldiers and used fast boats such as the "stripped dragon" and the "fast crab" to move the silver out to the foreigners and import opium to the populace. Therefore from Daoguang 3 to 11 the annual outflow or leakage of silver was 170 or 180 million *taels*; from Daoguang 11 to 14 it was over 200 million and from Daoguang 14 to the present day the flow has increased to over 300 million. Add to this the seaports of Fujian, Zhejiang, Shandong, Tianjin and that amounts to many million more taels. (Wang Zhichun of the late Qing dynasty in *Guochao rouyuan ji Records of Graciousness to Strangers in the Present Dynasty*). Records indicate that before Daoguang 3, 1823, the Manchu Qing export surplus was still approximately 2.6 million taels, but at this stage, the outflow may have been at least 4 million taels and this was exchanged for opium which 'withered the body, poisoned the mind and terrified the family'. Taxation increased, commodities rose in price, the people were impoverished and their money was exhausted, so for many ordinary people revolt seemed the best prospect.

Needless to say, this memorial to the emperor from Huang Juezi rebuking the level of danger from opium leaked out to the relatives of the emperor, the children of the Eight Banners the concubines and eunuchs of the palace and such people who were the principal opium addicts squandering the finances of the state. How the embezzlement and corruption in which they took the lead cleared out the coffers of the Manchu Qing government is worth further investigation.

ESSAY 33

Another Look at the Opium War

Chinese scholars studying the history of the Opium War or wars in the last century have not broken away away from the study of Confucian classics. One superficial characteristic though is that scholars who had formerly made a name for themselves discussing the Opium War as the starting point of modern Chinese history had shifted and indicated their opposition to the idea of cutting Qing history in half at the waist and had changed into re-revising the history of the whole Qing dynasty. They became Chinese versions of Inaba Iwakichi [the Japanese author of a complete history of the Qing]. Therefore not at all surprisingly when books by the Frenchman Alain Peyrefitte, *L'Empire immobile ou le choc des mondes*, and the American James Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793*, appeared in Chinese translation, they stimulated fortuitous ripples in mainstream modern history.

The centre of gravity of the research of both Peyrefitte and Hevia was the collision between China and Britain embodied in the Macartney Embassy to China in 1793, the 58th year of the reign of Qianlong. Although the standpoint and method of the authors diverge, Peyrefitte attaches more importance to the historical process embodied in the documents, but the two books both consider that the leading reason for this collision or clash was really the Opium War of 1839, Daoguang 19. In what was almost half a century from the Macartney embassy to Lin Zexu's ban on opium, the Qing dynasty experienced the three reigns of Qianlong, Jiaqing and Daoguang, from grandfather to grandson. The Manchu aristocracy could hardly be said to be continuing its monopoly of the military and political traditions, and Europe, undergoing the French Revolution, especially mopping up after the tempest of the Napoleonic Wars, was changed beyond all recognition, even though for Britain, which defeated Napoleon and preserved its control of the oceans, there was no comparison between the past and the present because of the rise to prominence of the United States of America.

Therefore the outcome of the Opium War was that the Qing dynasty was comprehensively defeated as it had neither the justice nor the strength (especially the economic strength), also because the opposition that Lin Zexu organised in Guangdong led to certain defeat by British naval power. From the documents on China's foreign relations during that year, it cannot be denied

that the Qing dynasty was defeated because of the overwhelming force of the enemy and because of its own weakness, the accumulated weakness of the hundred years of the Qianlong, Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns. Guaranteeing the political system of 'venerating the monarch'; the legal and statutory criteria that only paid attention to the relatives of the emperor and the upper aristocracy; the cultural policy that severely punished heterodoxy or heresy; the 'nourishing of honesty' mechanism, an allowance paid to officials to prevent corruption that [actually] encouraged corruption; and especially the adherence to the power structure that 'used Manchus to control Han', military control by the 'Eight Banner garrisons' and all similar traditional measures aimed at stabilisation and overwhelming opposition, confronting British battleships which had the highest record of originating global colonisation. All of these were stale and outworn.

Right up to the eve of the Opium War, the GDP of China under the Manchu Qing rulers was still at the number one place in the world. However old China in 1820, which had a share of world GDP that still stood at 32.9%, was defeated at the hands of Britain which in the same year had only 5% of world GDP. It can be seen that national wealth does not necessarily equate to power, and it is certainly not necessarily the case that it equated to the aspirations or will of the common people. That year when Lin Zexu banned opium in Guangdong, he felt that the greatest obstacle was not foreign merchants, but the Chinese traitors who collaborated with them, including many boat people who forgot what was right at the sight of profit and assisted the foreign vessels. Was the significance of this that people in the lower stratum of society were ignorant and backward? This is not the case, because in the eyes of the common people enduring the bloodsucking exploitation of the Manchu Han officials and military, compared with assisting foreign vessels with foodstuffs and drinking water from which they earned the resources for their livelihood there was not necessarily less benefit and greater harm. People of our era discussing the history of the Opium War are still more likely to pardon or excuse the deeply treacherous Manchu Qishan and others and spare no efforts in condemning trade between the Cantonese boat people and foreign vessels which, to say the least, emphasises the trivial over the significant.

I cannot readily subscribe to Peyrefitte's hypothesis, as he regrets that the Qing court did not grasp the opportunity for trade and diplomatic relations that the British envoy delivered to its doorstep, resulting in it being forced to open the door by the Opium War. Neither can I agree with Hevia's deduction, because he simply attributes the rejection by Qianlong and officials of the demand for the establishment of mutual trade by Macartney's diplomatic mission to 'the clash of China and Britain over rites and ceremony', which is

subjective conjecture with hardly any historical proof. The annotations of history may not be limited to one pattern, but the real appearance of history does not come from deduction.

Therefore I am of the opinion that the history of the Opium War should be researched again, but the premise of the research can only be to persist in explaining history from history itself.

20 November 2007.

ESSAY 34

Was the Daoguang Emperor 'Pitiful'?

It was in 1773 by the Western calendar that the chief engineer of the British East India Company, Colonel H. Watson and the deputy managing director Wheeler proposed that the company provide a loan to Bengali peasants growing opium poppies [*Papaver somniferum*] so that they would produce higher quality 'foreign medicine' [opium] compared with the opium that the Portuguese were importing into China from Western India. They had discovered that the habit of using opium was growing among the population of China, and this was a scheme that would potentially yield high profits.

That year was the 38th year of the reign of Qianlong. However after 20 years had passed, Qianlong was to reject the demands for trade made by the British envoy Macartney, and lectured this 'foreign barbarian', but not going so far as to condemn the English for selling opium and their dishonourable behaviour in China. After another two years, in 1796, the Qianlong emperor who had formally retired and taken the title of Emperor-Father (*Taishanghuang*), in the name of his emperor son issued orders on the suppression of opium. It can be seen how slowly the Manchu rulers came to perceive the pernicious influence of opium.

After another twenty years in 1815 (Jiaqing 20) the Chinese bannerman Jiang Youxian, who had a reputation for being honest and upright, was appointed Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi, and drew up regulations for the suppression of opium; he demanded a serious investigation into smuggling and encouraged that it be reported. His successor, Ruan Yuan, reaffirmed the ban on opium, specifically paying attention to control over illegal activities by foreign traders. He was also one of the earliest to recognise or acknowledge the 'strong ships and effective firepower' of the British and found ways to enhance the establishment of border officials and strengthen coastal defences. However he enthusiastically esteemed polite learning even in his defence against barbarians, taking precautions that the heart of the matter was economic countermeasures against the silver outflow. He was also lenient towards opium smuggling because he knew Guangdong well and understood that for the customs office to interfere with opium smuggling would turn it into a gathering place of fish and beasts, a den of iniquity. The profits from foreign trade by Guangdong Customs were a monopoly and the exclusive domain of the Imperial Household of the royal family.

Therefore during the Daoguang period successive governors of Guangdong, Li Hongbin, Lu Kun, Deng Tingzhen etc., whether or not the individuals were

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avaricious or relatively incorrupt, there was no way that they could check or control the outflow of silver that resulted from the smuggling of opium. Right up to 1838, the 18th year of Daoguang, a high tide of wrangling over whether the ban should be lifted or made stricter had engulfed the court. Lin Zexu, who had been appointed Viceroy of Hunan and Hubei, submitted a memorial to the emperor in support of Huang Juezi who had advocated a strict ban, saying: ‘if opium is not banned completely, the state will become impoverished and the people weaken by the day, and in ten or more years time will there be enough to raise funding for the military, moreover there may be no soldiers that could be employed.’

It was just these final words that got through to the emperor. Everyone knew that the Manchus, as a culturally backward border minority tribe from beyond the passes, had entered the passes taking advantage of Ming dynasty internal disorder, and by subduing the south and fighting in the north finally brought about great unity, and that what they relied on was the Eight Banners and Army of the Green Standard as the ‘soldiers that could be employed’. Garrisons of Manchu banners and the Chinese Army of the Green Standard had already become corrupt and degenerate, but at least they were experienced in dealing with civil disorder and had recently finally suppressed the rebellion of the White Lotus in Sichuan and Hubei. Who knew whether the White Lotus had been stamped out and the empire would be stable for another generation? Not only had the majority of the Manchu banner nobility and hereditary vassals become addicts, but so had the hereditary soldiers of the Chinese Army of the Green Standard. The possession of troops was necessary for the exercise of power, if the officers and men who should have been grasping guns could not tear themselves away from the opium pipe, could this kind of army protect people’s homes and defend the state?

The Daoguang emperor eventually became aware of the danger, understanding that having no ‘soldiers that could be employed’ signified that Manchu rule had reached a dead end. Therefore Lin Zexu was transformed into an imperial commissioner [*qinchai dachen*]. In fact the ‘British barbarians’, far from being sectarian rebels, were invincible and had defeated their enemies across the vast oceans. The emperor initially feared that leadership by the southerners would be ineffectual command by recalcitrant subordinates, and was ready to put the blame for a defeat in the Guangdong defence area on Lin, Deng and others. However he replaced Lin and Deng with the Manchu house bondsmen, Qishan and Qiying, using the imperial relatives Yishan and Yijing to act as commanders-in-chief.

The sixth generation Manchu overlord who had been on the throne for thirty years died nursing a grievance. He was 68 years old, his natural disposition was

frugal, his trousers were patched, and if he ate eggs he was concerned about the cost. All his life he took precautions against being swindled or fooled. Much later Republican officials, principally Xun Qingyi, were surprisingly full of sympathy for the Xuantong emperor, commending him in the *Qingshi gao* for maintaining the status of the sovereign. Is that not even more pitiable?

ESSAY 35

Lin Zexu and Gong Zizhen

In China everyone knows who Lin Zexu is. In 1839 (Daoguang 19) he served as Imperial Commissioner and in Guangdong sought out and destroyed by burning the enormous quantities of opium smuggled into China by the unscrupulous British merchants, astonishing China and the world. He became a scapegoat for the defeat of the Manchu Qing at the hands of the British in the first battle and for a long time afterwards was admired and respected by the Chinese people. However from the point of view of China's progress towards modernity, the greatest impression left on history by this tragic hero was the 'three maritime plans', especially the third plan based on defensive war: 'learn advanced technology from the barbarians in order to control the barbarians'.

It is said that the concept of 'distinguishing between barbarians and Chinese' formed by Confucius in the *Chunqiu* was, as long ago as the Tang dynasty, transformed from a way of differentiating between different races or ethnic groups into distinguishing civilised from wild. In the 17th century the Manchu Qing achieved the unification of the whole country, on the one hand insisting on 'using the Manchu to control the Han', while on the other emphasising that the civilisation of the empire was the best in the world, that is to say that influential Manchu officials had already become the epitome of progressive culture whether ancient or modern, Chinese or foreign. When in later years Qianlong arrogantly rejected the British envoy Macartney's demands for trade and diplomatic relations, the reason for this was that he, as the son of heaven of the heavenly dynasty in the most important nation in the world, simply could not deal in a reciprocal and equal manner with the 'western barbarians'.

In fact from the middle years of the Ming to the early Qing, the internal affairs of China had never achieved the condition of being well ordered and well regulated. Even without mentioning the continual crises on the borders and among the lower orders, even during what is called the heyday of the Manchu Qing (the High Qing) of the two reigns of Yongzheng and Qianlong, under the cover of superficial stability the dark and seamy side of social and political corruption was continually exposed from the earliest by the 'sinological school' of the southeast. Right at the end of the 18th century Qianlong died and his successor the Jiaqing emperor could not restrain himself from attacking the chief criminal of the empire, Heshen. Whatever his motive, the effect was to poke or stab through the black curtain the inside story, of imperial corruption at the highest level. Jiaqing and Daoguang, father and son, were both

mediocre monarchs, neither dare face squarely up to the reality that although the economy was superficially booming, power and authority were decidedly degenerating, and the two created a political crisis that was worsening daily. In the quarter of a century before the outbreak of the Sino-British Opium War, Gong Zizhen, the sensitive young poet and political commentator from the south, wrote an essay warning the rulers of the empire that, if they did not 'reform themselves' [*zi gaige*], then it was inevitable that there would be a 'revolution' [*geming*] of 'people from the mountains' [*shanzhong zhi min*] that would transform the country.

However remarkable those predictions were, none were any match for what Hegel described as the 'liveliness of reality and freedom'. Gong Zizhen had prophesied that the focal point of the crisis of the empire would be the danger of Tsarist Russia in the northwest and above all the breach by the Western powers that were making a breakthrough in the maritime borders of the southeast.

Lin Zexu was appointed by the emperor as an Imperial Commissioner. What kind of expectation this triggered between friends can be determined from Gong Zizhen's *Seeing off Commissioner Lin—public preface*. A combination of Gong Zizhen's romanticism and the longstanding great feudal official Lin Zexu who in political matters tended towards pragmatism would be unlikely to succeed so Lin graciously declined Gong Zizhen's request that he be allowed to serve as his assistant or aide de camp. He went to Guangdong, firstly winning over the support of the Governor-General Deng Tingzhen and the Provincial Commander in Chief Guan Tianpei and others senior civil and military officials, paying particular attention to establishing good relations with the Guangdong Governor Yiliang, a member of the Manchu Plain Red Banner. Yiliang was also Superintendent of the Guangdong Customs and had direct jurisdiction over foreign trade and after Lin Zexu was dismissed from office, he continued to oppose the powerful minister Qishan whose origins were in the Manchu Plain Yellow Banner, indicating clearly that it was a question of whether Chinese civilisation would survive or perish; splits were beginning to emerge within the inner clique of Manchu rulers.

Since the Republican period Lin Zexu has become a national hero praised in history textbooks at all levels. But in more standard histories, Lin Zexu is also described as a loyal official of the empire.

It was long ago pointed out that the four Manchu Qing dynasty reigns of Shunzhi, Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong, especially the 64 year reign of Qianlong and after his abdication, as emperor-father, who repeatedly emphasised while on the throne that the highest measure of virtue and propriety was 'loyalty to the sovereign and closeness to superiors'. This implies to the contrary

that Ming and Qing officialdom all approved of the moral concepts in the philosophy of Zhu Xi. The 'three cardinal guides and five constant virtues', or 'three obediences and four virtues' faced with the yardstick of a Manchu Qing emperor's loyalty to the sovereign and closeness to superiors', were no more than words. Since the greatest loyalty was nothing more than 'loyalty to the sovereign' and the greatest filial piety was nothing more than 'closeness to superiors', then the so-called Confucian ethics, wholly constructed on the basis of three cardinal guides and five constant virtues, were of absolutely no value. What is today called the new Confucianism is rarely investigated by historians, while no effort is spared to advocate abstract so-called Confucian fundamentalism, the mystery being whether they dare face up to history. At the very least it ought to be a historical topic, so how should 'learning advanced technology from the barbarians in order to control the barbarians' be understood from a historical angle?

26 November 2007, drafted at night.

ESSAY 36

It is Necessary to Say More about Gong Zizhen

At the beginning of the eighth month of 1841 (Daoguang 21), Liang Zhangzhen, the Governor of Jiangsu, who had just arrived in Shanghai to make preparations for defensive works to guard against a British seaborne military invasion, received a letter from Gong Zizhen who had just been appointed President of a Provincial College in Danyang [in Jiangsu], agreeing to relinquish his teaching forthwith and make haste to Shanghai to assist him in preparations for its defence, also to help the scholars and the citizens of Shanghai to construct a temple in memory of his deceased father, Gong Lizheng, an opportunity to take into account both loyalty and filial piety. However a few days later, after Liao Zhangzhen and others had arrived, there came from Danyang county a report that Gong Zizhen had died suddenly on 26 September by the Western calendar.

At that time Gong Zizhen was in his early fifties and less than ten days previously he had written the text for an inscription for Wei Yuan's villa in Yangzhou, and had only just returned to Danyang when he suddenly died; naturally this brought about a profusion of comments, surmising the reason for his death. During the late Qing period it was said that he had been poisoned, and the question was raised as to who had poisoned him. Others suggested that while he had been in Beijing he had had illicit relations with Gu Taiqing, a concubine of the Manchu imperial clansman, Yihui, who had sent one of his henchman to have Gong killed. Alternatively Gong had become sentimentally attached to a prostitute, and out of jealousy she got someone to poison him. If it was the first explanation, the matters involved the favourite concubine of a grand Manchu aristocrat of exceptional talent and distinguished appearance, and what is more public opinion bubbled and gurgled wondrously, whether among officials or the general populace. Moreover it was played out in poetry from both sides, which gave this topic of conversation a romantic reputation, and it became known as the 'lilac blossom' case. This aroused the literary passions of refined scholars, and prompted distinguished individuals such as Meng Sen, Su Xuelin and Qian Mu to write critical essays. Nowadays from the negative side the most exhaustive textual research is that of Fan Kezheng in his essay 'On Gong Zezhen's departure from Beijing and death' (see *Gong Zizhen Nianpu kaolǘ* Beijing: Commercial Press, 2004). However denying the story is not the same as proving anything, Gong Zizhen's actual age was only 49 so he was young when he died, and the genuine reason for his death must remain one of

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the unsolved mysteries of history. (see the present author's *Yindiao weiding de chuantong* Liaoning Educational Press, 1995, pp. 179–183).

Modern historians of the last hundred years generally speaking agree with Liang Qichao's judgment, that Gong Zizhen can be thought of as the harbinger of late Qing enlightenment thinkers. In the quarter of a century before the outbreak of the Opium War between Britain and the Qing, Gong Zizhen a young man from Hangzhou only some twenty years of age, had shocked the literary world with his series of essays of political criticism such as *Mingliang lun* and *Yibing zhi ji zhuyi*. Even though, after the Manchu Qing had entered the passes words such as 'modernisation' [*weixin*] and 'reform' [*gaige*] were used time and time again in the edicts of Dorgun and the Shunzhi emperor, genuine appeals enabling the empire, which was following the same old road to ruin that was taken by the defunct Ming, to 'reform itself' [*zi gaige*], in the Jiaqing and Daoguang court and among the public produced wide-ranging reverberations. However this 'self reform' was still the aim of Gong Zizhen, who made public his views that he was a believer in Wang Anshi's reforms. Gong Zizhen's official career met with setbacks and he was 38 by the time he achieved the *jinshi* degree. He drifted along for eight years in administrative posts such as Secretary in the Grand Secretariat, in the Imperial Clan Court and Assistant Secretary in the Board of Rites. He was still only a metropolitan official of the sixth grade. Eventually it turned out that an uncle of his who acted on behalf of the President of the Board of Rites, had requested instructions from Daoguang as to whether, according to the official regulations of the Great Qing, he could ask that his nephew might withdraw from his official post. He received the imperial response: 'Let it be known that Gong Gongzuo (Gong Zizhen's official name) withdraws according to the regulations'. Gong had to choose between running along as an official or retiring and he chose to renounce the salary of an official on the pretext that because of his father's age and as the only son he was obliged to serve him; his way was officially cleared for him to return to the south.

In this way Gong Zizhen retired at 48 years of age. Immediately, and alone, he left the capital, leading to conjectures in previous narratives that he was obliged to escape from the relatives of Yihui. In fact he had lost his job, his life was in decline and at first he had to find somewhere to live and obtain a means of earning a livelihood. His father had a villa in Kunshan, but it was in need of renovation. However he still apparently felt secure, one of the reasons for thinking this being that after he had restored his old home, he went north to make contact with a relative, but did not want to enter the city of Beijing again.

Gong Zizhen, when he held office at court, supported the position of Huang Juezi, Lin Zexu and others on the suppression of opium. Just as he left office,

Lin Zexu was appointed by the Daoguang emperor to the post of Imperial Commissioner for the Suppression of Opium. Gong Zizhen was excited and volunteered to become Lin's personal assistant [*muyou*] and accompany him to Guangdong. It is not known whether this was rejected by Lin. From the way the movement for the suppression of opium developed, it is clear that Commissioner Lin, thoroughly understood the mysteries of the fortunes of the Manchu Qing system better than this old friend. The sixth generation Manchu Qing emperor who reigned as Daoguang was both avaricious and distrustful. since the 'inner Manchus' also 'employed Han Chinese', to ensure that revenues in the Imperial Household came rolling in from the Guangdong Customs, he was afraid that the Han officials would encroach on the exclusive preserve of the imperial family. From Lin Zexu's memorials sent to the emperor from Guangdong, it is not difficult to discern his strategy of emphasising suppressing opium or managing barbarians, in all respects indicating that he is protecting the authority and interest of the emperor. This was precisely what Gong Zizhen did not understand. His political commentaries were selfless and directed towards public opinion. In such a plan or scheme, 'every action needs an elder brother' because there was bound to be a negative effect on the interests of the aristocracy right up to the imperial family.

Gong Zizhen was certainly not stupid, and quickly understood his old friend's predicament of dealing with 'the evil foreigners' and worshipping the generals. 'I have a secret charm of 300 characters, a wax-coated pill that it is difficult to send so have pity on my great works'. For this see the 47th poem in *Jihai za shi*: the sources for this appear to be the classic *Lawan* in *Yinfujing* and *Sunzi shi jia zhu*. Li Guangdi, at the time of the conquest of the Three Feudatories in Kangxi's reign, usied a wax-coated pill to report secretly to Kangxi on Geng Jingzhong's rebel activities against the Qing. Li Guangdi was a celebrated rationalist Confucian statesman who had the trust of the Kangxi emperor. He had won the confidence of the emperor, by no means on account of his scholarship but because during the Three Feudatories Revolt he betrayed his friends to seek honour, firstly prevailing on his old friend Chen Menglei to feign submission to Geng Jinzhong, and then got Chen Menglei to send wax-coated pills with intelligence from the enemy camp, pretending that he had made them to be sent to the emperor. The outcome was that at the end of the Three Feudatories Rebellion, Li Guangdi, because of the wax-coated pill, jumped upwards and Chen Menglei because he had committed the crime of near treachery was sent into exile. Gong Zizhen apparently did not know that in fact Li Guangdi was regarded with deep concern by Kangxi, and that at the same time as he was showing that he made allowances for the plight of Lin Zexu, he considered himself to be the contemporary equivalent of Li Guangdi.

Did he really understand 'modern history', that is the Qing history of the previous two hundred years?

Some writers on the modern history of China consider that Gong Zizhen should be compared with the Italian renaissance writer Dante. Are the two comparable? If we investigate the whole field of Chinese history on the eve of the Qing-British Opium War, from time, place, personnel and events, with the lively period of Western European history covered by the writer of *Divine Comedy* at the time of Zhu Xi, what is the degree of similarity? From the standpoint of current researches, there is no way that Dante can be compared with the Gong Zizhen of 500 years later.

1 February 2008, at night.

ESSAY 37

'Attacking Poison with Poison'

The recurring prohibitions of narcotics in China have continued for almost three hundred years; they have mainly involved opium and its derivative morphine but there were also heroin which was extracted from opium.

Research indicates that opium's transition from a medicine to a narcotic began first in Taiwan in the early part of the Qing dynasty. Taiwan's non-aboriginal people are all of migrant stock from the mainland beginning in the Ming-Qing period and their ancestral homes were in Fujian province. Therefore opium as a narcotic flowed back to the mainland from Taiwan, initially, not surprisingly, flooding into Fujian. Similarly in 1729, the 7th year of the Qing Yongzheng emperor (Shizong), the magistrate of Zhangzhou in Fujian sent a memorial to the court reporting on a case in which smuggled opium had been seized, and this became the supreme example of orders to suppress drugs for the Manchu Qing government, again hardly surprising.

What was strange was that in Yongzheng 8 after the order, 'Regulations on people living away in Taiwan and trading in opium tobacco', was issued to suppress narcotics, for the 70 years through to the end of the Yongzheng reign and the whole of Qianlong's reign (including the three years after his abdication), the Manchu Qing government never again raised the question of the pernicious influence of the spread of narcotics. Does this have any connection with the Qianlong emperor, who in his later years, loathed hearing about the mentality of the Qing 'heyday with malpractices'? That remains unclear. What is clear is that when the Qianlong emperor's successor by imperial order, the Jiaqing emperor, became ruler in his own right (from 1799), the harmful effects of the spread of opium had already spread to Beijing, and moreover the users of opium included court eunuchs and princes of the Manchu banners.

Neither was it strange that when the Jiaqing emperor had just begun to rule in his own right he began the serious suppression of opium narcotic traders. Who was to know that the more it was prohibited the worse it became, so that by the time of his death in 1820 (8th month of Jiaqing 25), opium addicts could be found everywhere throughout the empire, high and low, lords and commoners.

The Daoguang emperor, following in his father's profession, had been ennobled as a prince because he resisted the attempt to occupy the Forbidden City by Lin Qing [in the 1813 Eight Trigrams uprising]. His farsightedness is reflected in getting to the root of the problem, not only insisting that foreign

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boats involved in Guangdong maritime trade all signed an undertaking that they would not carry opium, he also gave strict instructions that any within China who smoked or traded in opium should be punished, 'those who open opium dens should be strangled, those who trade in opium should be conscripted into the army and those who smoke it should be flogged and imprisoned'. Who was to know the emperor had made up his mind that suppressing narcotics had been achieved? He promoted Li Hongbin, the Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi to Assistant Grand Secretary, responsible for sending armed forces into Guangxi Yao areas to suppress a rebellion. It collapsed at the first encounter, and people accused the army of being 'double barrel soldiers'; just before going into battle they relied primarily on the barrels of their opium pipes and did not resist what was just a disorderly mob. The emperor was extremely angry and Li Hongbin was banished to Ili.

Punishing great officials who deceived the emperor could not block the 'leaky wine cup', the smuggling of opium that led to the outflow of silver and the loss of economic rights to foreign interests; it was even less possible to transform the opium-taking that was turning into a crisis in the civil service and the military. What was to be done? There was controversy at court. One faction advocated the relaxation of the ban and suggested that the government might as well simply tax and legalise the opium trade. Heavy taxation could be used to check and block the import of 'foreign smoke', covertly stimulating or encouraging 'local smoke' to compete with it; another faction advocated strict suppression to sever completely the trade and scrupulously observe morality and ethics, such as proposed by Huang Juezi and approved of by Lin Zexu, to prevent opium from poisoning the vitality of the soldiers and people of the empire.

Unfortunately the Daoguang emperor entrusted this mission to Lin Zexu, who was only effective in Guangdong and was not able to obstruct British warships or naval vessels sailing north along the coast to threaten the northern gates to the empire. The emperor was alarmed and confused, made a scapegoat of Lin Zexu and was forced to open five trading ports, in exchange for preserving the stability of the empire as a whole.

The effect of this does not need reiterating; from then on the Great Qing Empire became the helpless victim of the Western powers; it was like meat on a chopping block. However the Manchu Qing empire would not throw in the sponge, since there was no way to stem the tide of opium smuggled in by sea, why not 'attack poison with poison'? After the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing between the Qing and the British, the Daoguang emperor fired off repeated edicts, demanding that local officials severely punish traders in and users of opium. This was of course ineffective. By the time his son, the Xianfeng

emperor was forced to 'lift the ban on foreign smoke', all the opium imported through Chinese ports was liable to pay tax at 30 *liang* [taels] of silver per 100 *jin* [catties]. Since the opium trade was thus effectively legalised, how could the cultivation of opium crops within China be prohibited? What was unforeseen was that this on the contrary stimulated the spread of the cultivation of 'local smoke', which then competed with 'foreign smoke', leading to the shrinking of imports of 'foreign smoke', rather in accordance with market principles, 'attacking poison with poison'.

'Attacking poison with poison' was undoubtedly economically effective. In the forty or so years from the Second Opium War which broke out at the end of the Xianfeng period, right through to the collapse of the Qing in 1911 (the 3rd year of Xuantong), the Manchu Qing suffered constant civil strife and external aggression, ceding of territory, being forced to pay reparations, unprecedented humiliation, and a foreign trade surplus. It can be seen that the reason for the accumulated weaknesses of late Qing China was not just economic.

The idea of the late Qing authorities of 'attacking poison with poison' also reflected the policy of suppressing narcotics. In 1838 (Guangxu 18), Lin Zexu took up his appointment as Governor-General of Hunan and Hubei: among his 6 articles in response to the imperial decree to 'prepare to discuss regulations for the suppression of opium', apart from recommending that the emperor crack down heavily on opium dealing and smoking, he also took into account the dependence on narcotics among gentlemen [*junzi*], and offered up the various types of 'anti-smoking measures' that he personally believed had been effective in Hunan and Hubei. But, examining the prescription that he wrote out, there could have been no lack of 'pain relief pills', 'supplement and correction pills', 'four ingredients draught' or 'gourd and fruit juice', or the 'white ash', burnt residue from the place for smoking opium tobacco ash. This kind of white ash was commonly called 'white powder' or 'white flour' (heroin), and right up to the Republican period, it was the low-priced narcotic sought out by opium smoking gentleman addicts. It also became the principal raw material for the 'anti opium pills' handed out by the government to narcotic addicts. Who was to know that this was locally produced heroin, of a strength and addictiveness greater than that of either opium or morphine? After smoking the opium it could be mixed into various kinds of anti smoking medicines which led to greater dependency. When I was young I witnessed an uncle and aunt, who had been reduced to poverty and destitution because they had been smoking opium, turn to 'white flour' (heroin), with the result that both of them died vomiting blood. Lin Zexu probably did not know that this 'tobacco ash' was heroin, but the 'anti-smoking measures' that he presented to the emperor were evidently another fatal prescription for 'attacking poison with poison'.

From the late Qing to the Republic, a period of more than a century, governments frequently issued bans on opium smoking, but how effective was this? If they were not using anti-smoking prescriptions of all types to kill people, then they were using prohibition on smoking and narcotics as a pretext for stopping the production of narcotics like opium, morphine and heroin. By the eve of the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan, Chiang Kai-shek, who had assumed the office of Chairman of the Military Committee of the National Government, personally and with the Inspector General of Opium Suppression, was a clear example to his successors: of course this was the only example of 'attacking poison with poison' in China at that time.

27 April 2008, at night.

ESSAY 38

Residual Doubts and Queries after the Opium War

Nobody expected that in the Sino-British Opium War (1840–1842) the Manchu Qing dynasty that ruled China would be defeated by British warships that forced their way through the gates. There was then no alternative but to conclude an unequal treaty, a 'covenant under the white flag of surrender', pay enormous reparations, cede Hong Kong, open five ports to trade, and allow the foreigners to establish concession in Shanghai and other cities, bringing to the Celestial Empire deep shame and humiliation such that it had not known for two hundred years.

This is the point at which the history of the Manchu Qing was cut in half. The period before the twentieth year of Daoguang (1840) was assigned to 'ancient history' and the 70 years of the late Qing that followed it belonged to the beginning of 'modern history'.

The fundamental explanations of history did not alter. But, 40 years previously, in the history of the empire the praises were being sung of a flourishing and prosperous age of one hundred years. Who was to know that within only a reign and a half (the Daoguang reign continued for another ten years after the Opium War) writers of the history of the court and the common people of the empire would be lamenting in unison the steady social and economic deterioration, as it turned into an 'age of decline'.

In fact a quarter of a century before 7 April 1840, demands had appeared in the British parliament for an 'expedition to China', and the young Chinese poet and political essayist, Gong Zizhen, had exposed the extent of political corruption and social darkness of the empire, the only way out being to take the initiative and implement 'self reform' from top to bottom, otherwise the Qing would inevitably take the same disastrous road as in the final phases of past empires. 'The people from the mountains cry out loudly, heaven and earth beat gongs and drums and the immortals make waves'.

At that time the Manchu Qing government had successfully put down three 'heterodox sects', the White Lotus that had spread across seven provinces in the south and southwest in 1802, the rising of Heaven and Earth Society from Taiwan to Guangdong in 1804 and the Heavenly Principle sect [better known in the West as the Eight Trigrams] in 1813. The entire country praised the wisdom and astuteness of the Jiaqing emperor. Gong Zizhen and his colleagues, considered that the internal disorder had been cleared up, but their eyes were directed towards Tsarist Russia which was encroaching eastwards and leading to a crisis on the northwestern borders.

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One cannot say that the Manchu Qing rulers were not affected by the crisis on the borders. One case in point is that researches on the 'history and geography of the Northwest' in the late Jiaqing and early Daoguang periods was tolerated and even encouraged by the court. However in the Manchu dynasty, as previously, 'the officials were indolent and the officers frivolous'; they presented a false picture of peace and prosperity, especially in relation to the 'silver outflow' caused by opium smuggling in the southeast. Whatever countermeasures should have been adopted, in almost thirty years of controversy within the court, the two emperors Jiaqing and Daoguang could still not come to a definite decision. Does this not, to speak from the opposite side, make it clear that the this dynasty was already, in the words of Gong Zizhen, monopolised from top to bottom by the mediocre and therefore completely without hope?

In the early period of the Republic, the Ming-Qing historian Meng Sen spoke in defence of the Manchu Qing rulers forty years before the Opium War. In his *Ming Qing shi jiangyi* [*Lectures on Ming and Qing history*], he speaks of, 'Jiaqing Daoguang conservatism and the maintenance of the achievements of their predecessors'. This Meng Sen was active for a time in the Diet of the Republic, which indicates that he was hardly 'a diehard lackey of the Qing' and supported the structures and system of a democratic republic. From this one is led to some scepticism about his explanations for the Manchu Qing going from blooming to decline in the Jiaqing and Daoguang periods. At the end of the 18th century the great Manchu Qing emperor, Qianlong, rejected the 'tribute goods' of the British envoy Macartney, for the reason that there was nothing that China did not already have. How come after 40 years, Qianlong's grandson the Daoguang emperor was forced to open five coastal ports for trade and admit the influx of a tidal wave of 'foreign goods'?

The classic explanation offered to Chinese readers, from Fan Wenlan's *China's Modern History* [*Zhongguo jindai shi*] to Hu Sheng's *From the Opium War to the May Fourth Movement* [*Cong yapian zhanzheng dao wu si yundong*], is invariably that before the Opium War, the Qing empire in political, economic, financial and cultural terms, as well as military, was comprehensively backward.

'Backward, therefore had to be defeated'. Before the Opium War, China, as in Napoleon's 'sleeping lion' description had been soundly asleep for a thousand years and did not wake until it was suddenly given a sound beating by the western invaders. But by then it was too late and people allowed themselves to invaded, oppressed and exploited. Was China before the Opium War really completely backward? Only history itself can provide the answer.

20 November 2007, at night.

PART 5

Gods and Sages



ESSAY 39

'The Way of the Gods Established the Teachings' in the Qing Dynasty

'The way of the gods established the teachings' is current in ancient, modern, Chinese and foreign histories. It is clear from Qing or modern history that for the succession of Manchu emperors this point was especially serious.

In the early years of the last century, the Russian anthropologist, S.M. Shirokogorov (1887–1939), who had been a professor at Tsinghua University, after many years' fieldwork in north eastern China, pointed out that that those who established the Qing Empire were 'New Manchus'. Their cultural formation was different from the 'old Manchus' who still lived in the mountains and forests of northern Manchuria: the 'old Manchus' still believed in the traditional shamanism of their ancestors. The 'new Manchus' were not Buddhists, but Confucians and the 'new Manchus' after Nurhachi, 'at the same time as believing in shamanism honoured both Buddhism and Confucianism. [See the author's *Zouchu zhong shiji* Fudan University Press, 2008, pp. 1–5].

According to Shirokogorov's one and only academic disciple at Tsinghua, Fei Xiaotong, the scholarship of his Russian teacher surpassed that of his teacher in England, Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942), even though Malinovski is considered outstanding in Western anthropological circles. I am not qualified to gossip about the attainments in cultural anthropology of the two gentlemen Shirokogorov and Malinowski, but I do have the same feeling about Shirokogorov's portrayal of the characteristics of the beliefs of the new Manchus, and consider that his description corresponds to the historical reality of 'the way of the gods established the teachings' in the Manchu Qing dynasty.

In 1644, (the first year of the Shunzhi reign) the Manchus entered Beijing and immediately established an imperial sacrificial temple [*tangzi*], a sacrificial altar for the shamanic sorcerer's dance. Shamanism [*saman*] is a transliteration of the word in the Tungusic Manchu language which is represented by the Chinese character *wu* that means witch or wizard. The entire Manchu defence and state administration were all led by the emperor and the Manchu nobility and senior officials to the sacrificial temple to request spiritual instructions [*shenyu*] from the shamaness or sorceress. Nevertheless in the middle years of the Qing some Manchu aristocrats, such as Zhaolian (Prince Li), the writer of *Xiaoting zalu*, a collection of miscellaneous notes on the history of

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the Qing dynasty, strongly disputed whether the Manchu sorcerer's dance corresponded to the 'ancient customs' of the Han and Song dynasty Confucians. Even as late as the eve of the fall of the Qing the Han gentry, who were excluded from the ceremonies of the sacrificial temple, still did not properly understand the the true nature of the sorcery of the temple. This is clear from *Bo Youwei lun geming shu* (*Refutation of Kang Youwei's writings on revolution*) written in 1903 by Zhang Taiyan (Zhang Binglin), in which he argued that 'the sorceress of the sacrificial temple is not a sacrifice according to the teachings of Confucius'.

Those who discuss the 'revolution to expel the Manchus' at the end of the Qing dynasty particularly emphasise the shamanic beliefs of the Manchus: the differences from the Confucian tradition of the Song and Ming dynasties, can explain it but one certainly cannot blindly approve of this explanation. They themselves are similarly at fault in being anti-historical. In 1905, Sun Yat-sen created the Tongmenghui in Japan by uniting the various anti-Qing factions. In a programme of sixteen written characters, the first eight characters read 'drive out the Tartar enemy and recover the Chinese nation', an exact copy of the official proclamation of the northern expedition of Zhu Yuanzhang, later the first Ming emperor, when four hundred years previously he had rebelled against the Yuan and declared himself king, but with one character altered—'Mongol [*hu*] enemy' was changed to 'Tartar enemy'. It can be seen that the nationalism paraded by Sun Yat-sen, one of his Three People's Principles, excluded from the category of Chinese nations those such as Mongols, Semu and other border peoples who were equally Chinese. This was also equivalent to the worthless debate on the distinction between foreigner and Chinese [*yi-xia*] established in the late Ming and early Qing which instigated the great Han chauvinism of 'oppose the Qing and restore the Ming'.

When the Manchu Qing entered Beijing they paraded the tradition of scrupulous adherence to agreements, 'changing New Year's Day in the calendar and the colour of garments worn and adjusting the system of government'. However promulgating the enforcement of the imperial almanac [*huangli*] 'according to the new ways of the West', forced the conquered races of Han, Muslim, Zhuang, Yi, Miao and Yao etc. to shave their heads but leave a pigtail or queue, and ensured the disappearance of the outward differences between Manchu and Han and the double track system of Manchu and Han structures of authority. From the centre to the localities, the system of 'Manchu controlling Han' was established, with garrisons of the Eight Banners guaranteeing the special privileges of the Manchu rulers. These and other similar arrangments brought about the Manchuisation of the entire country.

The Manchus, as a culturally backward minority group, were able to subjugate the whole of China because of the circumstances of the time. Initially it seemed as if submitting to Manchu military control would be sufficient and there would be no problem with the religious beliefs and cultural traditions of the conquered races. However, following the unification of the entire country, the diversity of space embodied in the provinces, prefectures and counties, the ethnic differences embodied in the greater and lesser races, the divergence of interests embodied in the concentration of power in the centre and local forces, not to mention the existence in every village and hamlet of clan and family conflicts, all brought a crisis of control for the empire.

Therefore during the first few decades after the Manchu Qing entered the passes and occupied Beijing, the clique of conquerors with the Shunzhi and Kangxi emperors at its head were confronted by continued turmoil, turbulence and unrest in the south; their hearts were full of dread and they had to be vigilant even in times of peace. The Shunzhi emperor took the opportunity of memorials on cases brought to a close and in the examination halls for a brutal attack on the southern gentry, but news of the northern expedition of Zheng Chenggong [Koxinga] was like the splitting of bamboo or a hot knife through butter, and frightened him to the extent that he even considered retreating to the ancestral homeland beyond the passes. The Kangxi emperor eliminated the Three Feudatories rebels and conquered Taiwan, both of which were of great importance for in the fate of the dynasty; when conquering Taiwan he did not hesitate to collaborate with the Dutch invaders.

The problem is that Shirokogorov's view that the so-called new Manchus 'at the same time as believing in Shamanism also worshipped Buddism and Confucianism', might have exposed or unmasked the Beijing court's characteristic of 'establishing teachings in the way of the gods', but it did not explain the process by which this characteristic took shape. This is understandable as in the end he was not a scholar of Qing history.

From 1644, the first year of the reign of the Qing emperor Shunzhi, a temple for imperial sacrifices was established within the imperial city and it lasted until the downfall of the empire. The Manchus on days of sacrifice and when soldiers were sent out to battle or on their return, and during similar major military events, had to go to the imperial temple, with all the princes, dukes and ministers, led by the emperor in person to hold traditional shamanic ceremonies. At first the most senior Han Chinese officials of the first grade were permitted to take part in the ceremonials, but by the middle of the Kangxi reign their participation was rescinded. The temple of imperial sacrifices thus became extremely mysterious; even Manchu close relatives of the emperor

and favoured courtiers had forgotten the origin of this institution, could not explain clearly what gods or spirits were sacrificed to in the temple, such as the late Ming General Deng or the mother of the Wanli emperor, or why.

At the beginning of the Republic Meng Sen in his 'Researches on Sacrifices offered to General Deng in the Qing dynasty Imperial Sacrificial Temple', brought to light the idolatry and images and changes of the shamanic religious tradition of the new Manchus: people who had been the ancestors and former masters of the state and had helped in the rise of the Manchus to prominence were venerated as divinities in shamanism.

Also like 'establishing teachings in the way of the gods' in other dynasties of the Middle Ages, the Manchu Qing above all demanded strengthening the centripetal force of the conquring race with the Aisin Gioro clan as the core. The new Manchus designated themselves as the direct descendents of the Jurchen of the Jin dynasty, but were extremely fearful of falling back into the rut of the Jin dynasty sinicisation. They more they stabilised their control over the whole country, the more the autocratic monarchy was strengthened, and the more anxious the emperor became about loss of authority by the conquering races.

People often say that the Kangxi emperor revered Confucius and venerated the Confucian tradition, but this overlooks that fact that when he revered Confucius, in reality he was revering Zhu Xi, believing that Zhu Xi represented the orthodox school of Confucius and Mencius; he established his own annotated versions of the works of Master Zhu. By 1712, the 51st year of Kangxi's reign, political affairs required the renewal of annotations to the ways of Confucius, Mencius, the Chengs and Zhu Xi in order 'to use Han to control Han', which absolutely must not obstruct his strict observance of the ancestral system of 'using Manchus to control the Han'. Therefore in dealing with the ethnic groups of the borderlands, such as the Mongols and Tibetans, he emphasised the role of Lama Buddhism, and, after the suppression of the Zunghar rebellion, did not change the religious beliefs of the Muslims, all of which confirms that the Manchu Qing rulers did not determine right from wrong according to 'the Confucian orthodoxy' of the Song and Ming. Needless to say its historical efficacy was that it eradicated the mediaeval tradition of unification of politics and religion, objectively acknowledging that religious pluralism could exist within a unified empire.

Therefore if after the new Manchus had become the masters of the Purple Forbidden City, the emperor's cultural policies appeared contradictory, they were in fact rather wise. If this border people had forced the conquered Han people and other minority ethnic groups to change their religion to shamanism, this would have inevitably precipitated cultural wars; if they had passively

accepted the culture of the conquered, then it would have been like the Liao, Jin and Yuan dynasties of previous generations, and the conquerors would quickly have fallen into the old ways of the conquered. Therefore it carried out a great political unification, but applied both the carrot and the stick to the religious and cultural traditions of the conquered ethnic groups, but without abandoning or renouncing shamanism. Although its 'establishing teachings in the way of the gods' in the final analysis did not work, a unified empire established by a minority [that is non-Han] people, unexpectedly transcending the mediaeval precedents, is a profound insider mystery with a continuous life extending for 167 years and is worthwhile for historians to investigate.

29 September 2008.

ESSAY 40

The 'Present Holy Sage' in Qing History

Speaking of the august name in Manchu Qing history, there is a point that is difficult to overlook, that is the line of Manchu emperors all liked to describe themselves as living sages.

'In affairs there is nothing that is illogical to call sage'; this comes from the Great Plan book of the *Book of Documents* [*Shangshu* or *Shujing*], this boundary fixer of the bogus Confucian tradition, also containing a commentary on the moral quality of monarchs or rulers by philosophers in a time of chaos. True and false Confucian scholars in the dynasties of the Middle Ages excelled at and loved to discuss over and over again 'handing down the doctrines of Yao and Shun, he modelled himself on kings Wen and Wu'; at any rate they did not expect this kind of 'contemporary sage', that is a living sage king. The superficial characteristics were that a fatuous and self-indulgent monarch or usurper on the throne and wild careerists coveting the imperial throne, even a powerful eunuch like Wei Zhongxian at the end of the Ming dynasty liked to call themselves 'contemporary sages'.

The Manchu emperors were of course not exceptions.

The Qing emperor Shunzhi became ruler in his own right in 1651 on the death of the regent Dorgon, but after ten years he contracted smallpox and died, his posthumous temple name being Shizu. It was said about him that '[Shi]zu had merit but the virtue came from the ancestral teachings'. However what this monarch revered were two of the early emperors of the defunct Ming dynasty: Taizu, Zhu Yuanzhang, the Hongwu emperor and Chengzu, Zhudi, the Yongle emperor. This father and son were both famous for being despots. Shunzhi repeatedly initiated mass imprisonments and severely attacked the staunchest anti-Qing southern gentry, but at the time of Zheng Chenggong's northern expedition was in such trepidation that he considered fleeing back beyond the passes. Later on his deathbed, he issued an 'edict confessing his sins' roundly cursing himself for departing from the ancestral system of 'Manchu control over Han'. All of this indicates clearly that he was modelling himself on Ming Taizu and wanted to be a living sage who 'established the laws and could hand them down to posterity. In the end he failed.

It was the second generation Manchu Qing emperor Kangxi who, even though he was on the throne for 61 years and died a mysterious death, still acquired the temple name of Shengzu [Sage Ancestor]. Whether looked at from the standpoint of a general survey of China's mediaeval history, or a

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broad view of world history in Kangxi's time, he does seem worthy of this honour, especially for his military expeditions to the north and south, his resistance to the Russians and establishing the borders, and laying the foundations for the great unity of the empire. He could certainly be called 'an exceptional individual in a sacred land'. But as to his administration? He established a system of secret folded communications, doubted the loyalty of his crown prince, and used the tactic of manoeuvering different political factions to stir up internal turmoil in the court. He was clearly aware of 'false Confucianism' but used 'false Confucians' like Li Guangdi to suppress the views of the Han people. He used Lama Buddhist monks and priests to restrict the Mongol and Tibetan aristocracy and weakened border defence forces, giving Tsarist Russia the chance to make incursions eastward. Turning a blind eye to corruption and opening up the buying and selling of office led to the systematic corruption of the empire which was difficult to reverse. Can he really be considered *as* a 'sage of his time'?

Whether the Yongzheng emperor killed his father and seized his wife in order to ascend to the throne is still a matter for debate. In his less than thirteen years on the throne he carried out a great internal purge of the Manchus; weakened Manchu rule, especially through turning his system of secret folded communications into a network of secret agents; established the Grand Council which was answerable only to the emperor in person; stripped the Grand Secreatriat of its administrative powers as a cabinet; created a literary inquisition to strengthen the authority of his personal ideology; and under the pretext of attacking Christianity whipped up popular xenophobia and a climate of isolationism; waved the banner of honesty in front of officials from the court down to the provinces, prefectures and counties and the Eight Banners and the Army of the Green Standard; and oversaw the construction of an organised collective for legal embezzlement (not a formal Qing term). According to the Confucian school of thought approved by the emperor in the late Kangxi era, the Yongzheng emperor's innumerable vermillion edicts and rescripts and the *Records of Great Righteousness to Resolve Confusion* [*Dayi juemi lu*] all upheld the lofty standards of Confucius and Zhu Xi. If as claimed by Dai Zhen [1724–77, the renowned Qing dynasty scholar] he had 'murdered according to principle', why should he not be called a 'contemporary sage'? But several historians of the Qing only praise the flourishing years of Kangxi and Qianlong, as if they were deliberately 'de-Yongzhengising', but the reason for this is not clear.

He initiated a secret system for nominating a crown prince and the fortunate son in the first rank was the 14th, Hongli. The story is that he was the illegitimate son of the emperor Yongzheng and a palace servant girl, 'sister stupid' [*sha dajie*]. But at only twelve year of age, he was ennobled as Prince Bao,

indicating clearly that Yongzheng was disclosing his secret, also inspiring this future great Qianlong emperor, while a restless and vigorous youth, to dream of becoming emperor. He was very fortunate at merely 25 years of age to ascend the throne. The huge empire that he inherited was the wealthiest in the entire world, and moreover, relative to the Occident that was continually at war and the Eastern Ocean [Japan] that was chaotic and emulating China, it had an advanced culture and relations between the Manchu and Han nobles were on the whole stable. This meant that it could wantonly squander the funds in the national treasury, and give full rein to creating cultural terrorism, to force the officials and the people to be 'loyal to the sovereign and close to those above'. He lived for a long time but while still in his middle years smashed the record for the history of literary inquisitions for all the dynasties of the middle ages and, as an enhanced contribution, 'burning books and burying scholars', more thoroughly than Qin Shihuang or Ming Taixu. He was not satisfied until no birds sang in the whole dynasty and there was silence; and in later years when he abdicated and appointed himself emperor emeritus *taishanghuang*, he proclaimed that 'the great matters of state are still our decision', devoting himself to the old tactics of shamanism, and relying on secret incantations to try to reclaim the life of an armed rebel chieftain outside the Great Wall. Heshen was better than anyone at fathoming out his paranoid psychology and could always anticipate his wishes and attend to them, rapidly ascending from sedan-chair bearer to the number one favourite at court. Unfortunately this powerful and treacherous official forgot that the mantis stalking the cicada might be unaware of the oriole following it, and when the emperor emeritus breathed his last, the life of this noble together with his property worth millions of taels which he had assiduously acquired through graft, was all suddenly expropriated by the Jiaqing emperor. It can be said that after the death of Qianlong, whose temple name was Gaozong, 'the high one speaks most on high' only from the point of view of precedents of previous emperors who all without exception dreamed of happiness, prosperous careers and long life but did not succeed. Qianlong of course could claim the accolade of outstanding 'contemporary sage'. His shortcoming was that all his life there were heterodox White Lotus sects rebelling all over the seven provinces of Chuan and Chu (Sichuan, Hubei and elsewhere) and only one hundred years after his death, a minor warlord of the Republican period robbed his mausoleum, ripped open his coffin and smashed his remains to pieces, so that even his skull could not be found (although some say that it was found but it was difficult to determine whether it was genuine).

After Qianlong, the Manchu Qing had another five generations and six emperors [presumably excluding the final emperor, Xuantong, from the

generations], and whether they were playboys and wastrels, weaklings or cowards who held office without working, or small boys who still smelled of their mother's milk, once they sat in the golden palace they were all called 'contemporary sages'. Apart from the father and son Jiaqing and Daoguang who maintained the corrupt autocracy and led the empire into decline, there were no 'sage hearts' but there is still controversy and the other four emperors called 'contemporary sage', have long since been revealed as frauds. Among the frauds more frauds emerged, that is to say Hong and Yang [the leaders of the Taiping rebellion] who were not in office, revolted unsuccessfully and took foreign teachings as the basis for awarding themselves the name of sage, and the concubine left behind by the wastrel Xianfeng emperor, who also relied on local, native religions and regarded herself as a 'sage mother'. The latter was 'mother gift to the world' [*muyi tianxia*] for over forty years and finally became the Empress Dowager Cixi who wrecked the empire. She was another victim of the warlord who robbed graves and opened coffins to smash corpses at the beginning of the Republican period. That story has been told many times so that is where it will be left for now.

ESSAY 41

How Did Military Sages Prevail over Civilian Sages?

It is not incorrect to argue that the Manchu Qing 'used the Han to control the Han' and paid particular attention to respect for Confucius. Neither is it wrong to say that the Manchu monarch and aristocracy all respected Confucius from the bottom of their hearts. However the Han Chinese individual that they most worshipped was Guan Yu [the Han dynasty general] who they honoured as Emperor Guan [as many Chinese in the south and the diaspora continue to do].

Many years ago, writing '*Sanguo yanyi* in the latter Middle Ages', I was reminded of the phenomenon of military sages prevailing over civilian sages that runs right through the whole of Qing history. The military sage was Guan Yu or Emperor Guan of the novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*) [often known as the God of War and the most popular deity in the pantheon of Chinese popualar religion], and the civilian sages were Confucius and his disciples Yan Hui, Zeng Shen, Zisi and Mencius [the 'four sages'].

As long ago as the end of the Qianlong reign, the well-known poet and historian Zhao Yi [1727–1814] regarded the level of Guan Yu worship by the Manchu Qing as strange: 'When someone dies and is deified, their spirits are probably illustrious for a few hundred years after their death, but in time they are gradually replaced. Marquis Zhuangmou [Guan Yu] was never the object of sacrifice in the periods of the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties and the Tang and Song. Examining the historical records, at the beginning of the reign of Song Weizong [1101–25] he was honoured as Duke Zhonghui, in the second year of his Daguan reign period (1108) Guan Yu was added to the canon of sages as the king of military pacification'. The Southern Song and Mongol Yuan dynasties both canonised Guan Yu as a king [*wang*] and installed him in a shrine. By 1594, the 22nd year of the reign of the Ming emperor Wanli, he had 'attained the rank of emperor [*di*]', 'in forty-two years he was canonised again as Saintly Great Emperor Vanquishing Demons in the Three Worlds whose Widespread Reputation Earns the Respect of Heaven. 'He was continually honoured at the military shrine and sacrifices were made to him as well as to Confucius. In 1652, the ninth year of the Shunzhi reign, he received another posthumous title of Great Saintly Emperor Guan. Today as far as the highest peak at the South Pole, or the Arctic Circle and the North Pole, every boy and girl is moved by his powerful spirit, and by the superiority of the incense [at his shrine], treating him as none more unfortunate in Heaven and Earth. At first he was

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desolate, and subsequently he manifested brilliance, so how can we know whether his spirit has faded away?'

The final words are really just a rhetorical question. Zhao Yi in 1756 (Qianlong 21), as a secretary in the Grand Secretariat, was in waiting for membership of the Grand Council; later he passed the imperial examination and graduated with the *jinshi* degree, entered the Hanlin Academy, participated in secret discussions for ten years and was extremely familiar with Manchu history and the current state of affairs; how could he not know the original reason why in the Qing idea that the 'way of the gods establishes teachings', the position of the military sage Guanmafa (Guan Yu in the Manchu language) had risen like a rocket? That profound mystery, as I have mentioned previously, is behind the shamanic temple ceremonies sacrificing to heaven by the Manchu aristocracy led by the monarch and his relatives. The highest gods of heaven recorded there are the Buddha Maitreya and the Boddhisatva Guanyin as the Tartar gods; the only Han Chinese transformed into a deity was Guan Yu, so was he not number one in the list of local Chinese deities?

The ceremonies of sacrifice to the gods stipulated by the previous six reigns of the Manchu Qing dynasty were divided into the three categories of large, medium and small; the sacrificial rites for Guan Yu were in the large category, known as the 'great animal pen' with three sacrifices of a whole ox, a whole sheep and a whole pig. The Yongzheng emperor also retroactively conferred the title of Duke on three generations of Guanyi's relatives, and even found descendants of the Guan family in Luoyang and Jiezhou and assisted scholars learned in the Five Classics in becoming hereditary sacrificial officials. Qianlong frequently denounced Chen Shou [233–297], the author of *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi*) for recording that Guan Yu was awarded the posthumous title of *zhuangmiu* (flawed warrior) by the state of Shu Han, as this was 'personal prejudice' ridiculing him, and issued edicts that the Office of the Four Treasuries republish this history, changing the original 'flawed' to 'loyal and righteous'. The fifteen hundred year old series of 'official histories' all had to be revised according to the decree of the 'contemporary sage', to the extent that this fallacy was handed down and persists to this day.

By contast note the repeated honours bestowed on the five sages of the Confucian temple, the Great Sage Confucius and the four worthies, Yan Hui, Zeng Can, Zisi and Mencius. Which of them could fight shoulder to shoulder with Guan Yu and call him emperor? Not one. They could only crowd in on either side of the spirit tablets of the former sages and enjoy the 'middle level sacrifices' in which only sheep and pigs were offered up, often because of the

corruption of the sacrificial officials or the poverty and pedantry of the educational and religious officials, and had to make do with a scrawny sheep or pig.

Perhaps because in every region there were many more temples dedicated to the God of War (Guanyu) than Confucian temples the heyday of joss sticks and candles for the ancestral sacrifices was far from usual and traces of human presence were rare, compared with the Confucian temples. The spirit of Guanyu was the 'sacrificial spirit of the court' within the Qing palace and its relations with the emperor were particularly intimate, therefore that class of candidates longing for success in the imperial examinations one after another sought refuge with the God of War and divined by drawing lots and sacrificed for their dreams at the shrine of Guanyu. It is said that this God of War responded readily, even to the extent of predicting the question topics for the current examination; he really was a 'spirit model of sincerity'.

However the negative side of the bizarre worship of Guan Yu by the Manchus in itself makes it clear that it was from a shamanic conviction that had become deformed before the Manchus came through the passes in 1644. According to pointers provided by the Han Chinese counsellor, Fan Wencheng, descriptions of the power struggles and games in the popular historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, were translated into the Manchu language, to act as teaching materials to enlighten the military aristocrats of the Eight Banners who had not yet abandoned their barbarous mentality. The Manchus honoured the legend of the celestial worthy, Guanyu the God of War and later it was combined with the arts of shamanic sorcery, and Guanyu was honoured as the highest deity of the Manchus, fulfilling a catalytic function. Following the conquest of the Central Plains by the Manchus, the Eight Banners changed into a parasitic ethnic group, abandoning their old customs of riding and archery and acquired the bad habits of the Han bureaucracy and gentry. Performing shamanic rituals, such as dancing the great sorcerers's dance to do obeisance to the flagpoles and the war horses, gradually became mere formalities. The Western red coat and artillery had been introduced and the God of War's exalted position retreated, just as the Manchu and Han, Hui and Mongol ethnic groups moved along in an appropriate process of common culture.

In 1852, the second year of the Qing reign of Xianfeng, the court on the one hand honoured Guanyu with a posthumous title but on the other changed the ceremonies to those of the middle level, similar to the sacrifices offered to Wen Chang, the God of Literature and the Sage of Literature, Confucius. There is something suspicious about this but any further comment must await convincing research.

The status and image of Confucius changed and this also aroused controversy. Kang Youwei studied the German religious reforms from a distance,

and wanted to establish a religion of 'Confucianism', converting Confucius into an incarnation of Jesus bearing on his back the cross. Zhang Taiyan [Zhang Binglin] advocated a 'revolution to expel the Manchus' and also wanted to 'establish a religion to bring about faith'. As we were saying, the foulness and filth of Confucianism and Christianity are similar and permanent. When the Empress Dowager Cixi was let off by the Eight-Power Allied Forces, fortunately she was not made an abandoned woman or divorced wife and in 1906 (Guangxu 32) at the same time as the proclamation of the provisional constitution, suddenly ordered that sacrifices to Confucius be raised to the level of Great Sacrifice. And the effect of this? It resulted in the Sage of Literature being responsible for the corruption and downfall of the Qing dynasty. Needless to say, within a few years Yuan Shikai had forgotten this historical lesson.

4 December 2008, at night.

ESSAY 42

Ji Yun and 'Basing Religious Teachings on the Divine Way'

Qing period scholars all maintained views identical to those of the Manchu monarch on 'basing religious teachings on the divine way'. Apart from what had already been set out in previous chapters, the twelve reigns of the Qing dynasty, without exception, upheld the traditions of new Manchu Shamanism, and continually canonised new spirits. It is only necessary to glance at the Monograph on Ritual [*Li zhi*] in the edition of the *Qingshi gao* that was compiled in the early years of the Republic, which runs to six chapters on auspicious rituals in which is recorded that in the past countless new gods [*shendao*] were canonised and it could be said that the empire was filled with ghosts and gods. None of the so-called Confucian scholars dared to question the rationality of the 'great sacrifices' to Heaven at the winter solstice or to the ancestors as prescribed by the Manchu sovereign. But when it involved Confucian temples, especially relating to who could characterise the orthodox tradition of Confucius and Mencius, then there was controversy.

Originally, although the Manchu court classified sacrifices to Confucius as 'middle ranking sacrifices', Confucius and his successors, Zeng, Yan, Si and Meng, still had the ten savants [*shi zhe*] of the Confucian school referred to in the *Analects* [*Lunyu*], and could only enjoy the treatment at the level of the lesser sacrifice with pigs and sheep. But in 1712 (Kangxi 51), this second generation emperor of the Manchus after they came through the passes and occupied Beijing, and whose temple name was *shengzu* [sage ancestor], [declared], 'With Zhuzi [Zhu Xi], flourishes the sacred study, he should be promoted to the level of the ten savants, his precedence to be divined' [see *juan* 84 and also juan 8 on Sacrifices to Sacred Ancestors of the *Qingshi gao*], and after that a controversy arose.

The pretext for the controversy was the annotated edition of the Four Books by Zhu Xi of the Southern Song dynasty, whether or not it was in keeping with the original teachings and instructions of the so called way of Confucius and Mencius. Long before, officials including Tang Bin, Ji Longqi and Xiong Cili and Li Guangdi tried to figure out the Kangxi emperor's internal misgivings about the 'using Han to control Han', of course they agreed with one voice. The Kangxi emperor was clearly aware that they were all 'false Confucians', but criticism was confined within the palace, and on public occasions still

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commended them as 'genuine Neo-Confucians'. The reason was simply the necessary for the arts of control (*See* Zhu Weizheng and others *Huli chunqiu*, (*Spring and Autumn in the Kettle*), Shanghai Wenyi Press, 2002, pp. 147–155).

The controversy, which had been concealed, became apparent in the *Siku quanshu zongmu* encyclopaedia index, the compilation of which had begun in the middle period of the reign of Qianlong. Before that, the terror of the literary inquisitions of the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods, drove away the Jiangdong scholars [from south of the Yangzi] within the small field of Confucian classical studies, particularly those of Jiangsu and Anhui professing not to read books from after the Han dynasty, who flaunted their position of 'seeking truth from facts, protecting and cherishing the ancients'. The unexpected consequence was that the original teachings, in the editions of the Confucian Four Books and Five Classics that Manchu imperial Neo-Confucian scholars devoted themselves to propagating, were torn apart and scattered in disorder, proving that the original Confucian scholars and the classical scholars of the Middle Ages and the annotations of the original classics that emerged later had nothing at all to do with each other.

For example Ji Yun was the chief editor of the *Complete Library in the Four Branches of literature* [*Siku quanshu*], using his well-known style [zi] of Xiaolan. He was a man from Xian county in Zhili (today part of Hebei province) and for half a lifetime devoted himself to wasting his time on the *Siku quanshu* and its summary general catalogue, the historical significance of which the majority of Qing history specialists are rather indifferent to.

In fact in the latter part of the 18th century, Ji Yun, with his friend Dai Zhen who died young and others, were criticising the bias of leading mainstream Neo-Confucian scholars on the subject of 'basing religious teachings on the divine way'. Dai Zhen in the *Siku quanshu* office was able to read Yongzheng's *Dayi juemi lu* and other prohibited books, to create the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* and, although he was on his deathbed, he wrote to his student Duan Yucai, to say that it represented a lifetime of his theories [on Confucianism]. But Zhang Binglin, Hu Shi and others who carried out research on this at the end of the Qing dynasty and the beginning of the Republic, considered that he was denouncing the Yongzheng emperor for 'killing people with principles'. (See Fantastic Ideas (*feiyi suosi*) in *Zouchu zhong shiji*, revised and enlarged editon).

Ji Yun did not have the straightforwardness of his departed friend, Dai Zhen. He wasted 20 years of his life as chief editor or compiler of the *Siku quanshu by imperial command*, not only experiencing deductions from his salary as fines and being denounced but was regarded by the Qianlong emperor as a favourite courtier. He followed the example of Dongfang Shuo [the Han dynasty Confucian philosopher, ?179–? 104 BC] by adopting a cynical pose, and apart

from the abstracts of the *Siku quanshu zongmu*, he only wrote 'tales of ghosts and fox fairies' as a diversion. Lu Xun said that his five types of *Notes from the Yuewei Hermitage* (*Yuewei caotang biji*) 'expressed weaknesses in the world of human beings, relying on fox fairies and ghosts to convey his personal perceptions', 'his dealing with nobles and the well off judged people in a forgiving way', therefore going against the meticulous fault finding of the Song Confucians. (See his *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* chapter 22). Investigating a little more it becomes clear that by the end of the Qianlong period, the more Ji Yun wrote, the more earnest and serious he became, using whatever situations arose to put his own ideas across, lashing out at mainstream false Confucianism of 'basing religious teachings on the divine way' and showing no mercy.

Needless to say Ji Yun inclined towards pantheism since he does not deny the existence of ghosts and spirts and also stresses that demons begin with people. If we make a better analogy, that theory is rather similar to the theodicy of the 17th century Dutch Jewish philosopher, Baruch Spinoza. Whether he reached the level of Marx's characterisation of Spinoza's pantheism, 'maintaining that the explanation of the world comes from the world itself', is another matter. But in the vague and hazy superstitions of 18th century China's 'spiritual support for monarchical power' through mythology or untruths, Ji Yun did not willingly wallow in the mire with mainstream ideologies.

Neither is it necessary to say that in his later years Ji Yun refuted 'the scholars' on the theory of the necessity of 'basing religious teachings on the divine way', if as Zhu Xi approved of a Confucian theory of no spirits, singing his own praises, a low grade misinterpretation of the original meaning of Confucius's 'respect the ghosts and the spirits but keep your distance', but because he compared interpretative readings of Confucius and did not repudiate the existence of ghosts and spirits, but suggested they should be respected but avoided. Whether this corresponds to the original teachings and instructions of Confucius in the *Analects* is also another matter, but it proves the shallowness of the ancient and modern Confucian scholars.

It is not necessary to criticise Ji Yun. After all he did live in the 18th century. I feel that the criticism of Ji Yun in the new *Cihai* encyclopaedia is not understandable: 'able in poetry and critical essay, excessive promotion of feudal ethical concepts, and works singing its praises'. Ji Yun's *Yuewei caotang biji* contains vestiges of the evolution of ideals, as if they were just the opposite. It seems as if this writer and his main editor had not even noticed that the assumptions of Ji Yun's *Might as Well Hear* [*guwan tingzhi*] in his later years are just the opposite.

In 1805 (Jiaqing 10) Ji Yun finally rose to the rank of Assistant Grand Secretary, but died within a month at the age of 82. The impression he has left for posterity is that of a scholarly and erudite court favourite in the Qianlong and Jiajing years and apart from Lu Xun's approval of his worth in literary history, no one has taken any notice of his satires on the 'basing religious teachings on the divine way' during the Manchu Qing Yongzheng and Qianlong periods. Even more so no one has paid attention to the historical truth contained in his theories of his pantheistic denial of this 'basing religious teachings on the divine way'. This is an absolute necessity for the reinterpretation of Qing and modern history.

23 October 2008, at night.

ESSAY 43

The Dual Effect of 'Basing Religious Teachings on the Divine Way'

'Basing religious teachings on the divine way', a concept which permeated the entire Manchu Qing period troubled China's ghosts and spirits everywhere. It's effectiveness in social history from the point of view of the Manchu rulers was that it fooled the populace and also fooled the rulers.

As has been set out previously, the Manchus maintained their shamanistic beliefs over a long period; at every major military event the emperor would always visit the imperial sacrificial temple, leading the aristocracy and senior officials, for the sorcerer's dance. According to evidence from Meng Sen at the beginning of the Republican period, the main deity worshipped at the imperial temple, General Deng, was Deng Zuo, Acting Commander in Chief and Assistant Secretary, who was killed at Fushun in 1467 (3rd year of the Ming dynasty reign of Chenghua) in the battle between the Jianzhou Jurchens, ancestors of the Manchus. Tradition has it that after his death he was transformed into the God of Plagues [*wenshen*], scaring the ancestors of the Qing ruling house, who were terrified of plagues and pestilence, and who dedicated a sorcerer's dance to him when they were ill. This is strange enough. Stranger still was that in the imperial sacrificial temple, above this main deity were three other great gods: in order they were Tathagata, one of the names used by the Buddha, the Boddhisattva Guanyin and 'Emperor' Guan Yu.

Tathagata and Guanyin were both 'barbarian spirits' from the Western Heaven and for the Manchus to 'use barbarians to entertain barbarians' was both fair and reasonable. What about 'Emperor Guanyu? Guanyu was from Shuhan in the Three Kingdoms period, but his image was no longer that presented in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* [*Sanguo zhi*], headstrong, obstinate and opinionated and killed in a surprise attack by the armies of Wu; he was now the Duke Gong deified in the novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* written by Luo Guanzhong in the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties, the 'flawed warrior' Guan Zhuangmiu who with only his skull remaining still frightened Caocao and caused him to have a brain tumour.

Many years ago in my '*Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in the Late Middle Ages' [*Zouchu zhongshiji* Coming out of the Middle Ages, pp. 246–258], I investigated the Manchu rulers' bizarre worship of Guan Yu, I pointed out that the

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basis of this worship was the earliest Manchu translation of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and it is not necessary to elaborate here. But my essay mentioned the Qing dynasty Qianlong and Jiaqing period historian and researcher Zhao Yi. Chapter 35 of his collection of miscellaneous notes, *Gaiyu congkao*, is worth recapitulating. According to Zhao Yi, the transmutation of humans into spirits normally takes place several hundred years after their death. Only in the case of Guan Yu it was nine hundred years after his death that he was canonised and ennobled as Duke or Lord [*gong*] and later as king. By the latter part of the Wanli reign of the Ming dynasty he had been promoted to 'Great Emperor who subdues the Demons of Three Worlds', and installed in the Temple of the God of War which was dedicated to him, and worshiped with Confucius in the Temple of Confucius. 'In 1652 (Shunzhi 9), he received the higher posthumous honour of Great Sage Emperor of Loyalty, Righteousness, Supernatural Military Prowess. These days throughout the world all boys and girls are astonished by his powerful intelligence, the abundance of worshippers burning incense, and his unprecedented misfortune. Before he was lonely and desolate and later after he manifested brilliance, so how can we know whether his spirit has faded away?'

Zhao Yi held the post of Secretary of the Grand Council for many years during the Qianlong period and wielded his writing brush to draft many edicts for the Qianlong emperor. He understood clearly and had inside information on 'basing religious teachings on the divine way' in the Qing court. Not only was Guanyu established in the Temple of the God of War, he was placed next to Buddha and Guanyin in the shamanist tradition, far higher than Confucius in the Temple of Confucius; after the two 'barbarian gods' he was the highest god followed by the Great Qing dynasty. That is amazing and logical but it does not help to unravel one of the enigmas of history.

The answer to the riddle lies in the Kangxi emperor's reception of the teachings of Xiong Cili and Li Guangdi and others, finally agreeing that 'using the Han to control the Han', and in ideological terms promoting the rationalist Neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi, was a short cut to falling into the clutches of conquered Han Chinese (including scholars of Muslim, Zhuang and other ethnic groups who had already accepted the uplifting influence of Neo-Confucianism). His son and grandson, the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors both came to understand that the legality of the rule of the Manchu conquerors had no rationale apart from the imperial bloodline. Therefore on the one hand the energetic pursuit of literary inquisitions, severely punishing any scholars who dared to call into question the tradition of 'Manchu inside and Han outside' or even pick holes in it, came to grief and did not make sense to

shrewd country Confucian scholars who were behind the times. On the other hand canonising a multitude of spirits in a chaotic fashion, as long as they were considered to be 'transmitting filial piety and loyalty', allowed officials great and small who were working themselves to the bone to stabilise orderly Manchu rule, with the approval of the emperor the opportunity to enjoy 'blood eating', the sacrificial offering to the gods. The long term effect was that in the uprising of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, gentry-officials who were out of office—Jiang Zhongyuan, Luo Zenan, Zeng Guofan and Hu Linyi among others—organised militias and struggled against the Taiping armies, a part of the picture from which it is possible to perceive the whole.

Of course the Manchu rulers practiced 'basing religious teachings on the divine way' on the scholar-gentry, encouraging them to follow the example of the Confucian scholar sages and 'transmit filial piety and loyalty' and 'respect the emperor and be close to those above'. They should strive so that after their death they would have sacrifices made to them in the Ancestral Hall of Displaying Loyalty and the Ancestral Hall of Able and Virtuous Men. For those of higher rank, special ancestral halls could be constructed in their honour or they could be canonised as gods, even to the extent of a general sacrifice in the Temple of Confucius. It was the 'four classes of people' [scholar, peasant artisan and merchant] that the gaze was fixed on, especially the peasants, that is to say that they were creating new divinities for the conquered people of the different ethnic groups.

It must be said that the ancestral system pursued by the Manchu Qing emperors was not ineffective. A clear example is the period of over a hundred years from Qianlong to the Guangxu reign. There were more and more popular revolts, all of which more or less had an identical pattern, that is they created ties for a mass revolt through various types of secret religious society or faction, stirred up rebellious feelings by word and deed, and without exception were strongly coloured by superstition. The level was rather lower than in the late Ming popular unrest which often directly led to demands for anti-government uprisings.

From the White Lotus sect and the Heaven and Earth Society at the end of the Qianlong period and the Heavenly Principle sect [Eight Trigrams] in the Jiaqing reign, the God Worshippers' Society and the Nian army at the overlap of the Daoguang and Xianfeng reigns, and in the Guangxu reign the Elder Brother Society and the Boxers, which of these did not emerge with the appearance of a 'heterodox sect'?

It is worth paying attention to the God Worshippers' Society created by Hong Xiuquan. It was the first time that a foreign deity had been esteemed

as the mainstay of a Chinese religion. It was also the first time that traditional Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist divinites were completely excluded as demons or evil spirits. Even though the 'heavenly truths' and rituals that it propagated were repudiated by many 'foreign brothers' in the Christian church in China, it called for the establishment of a Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace [Taiping Tianguo] and won over countless peasants in southern China who in succession dedicated there lives to it. This was by no means Hong Xiuquan, Yang Xiuqing and the others imitating the victory of a Western style of 'basing religious teachings on the divine way', it can only be said that it was a retribution for the Manchu version that duped the populace.

Whether Hong Xiuquan can be considered a characterisation of 'seeking truth from the West' is another matter. On one point there is no doubt; he sinicised 'basing religious teachings on the divine way', entering and taking control of the Stone City [Nanjing] when their methods had achieved their object, quickly reached the same goal as the Manchu 'evil spirits' by a different route, compelling the Taiping army and people to become immersed in superstitious groups, finally travelling the path of no return—fooling the people and fooling themselves—and coming to a bad end with the cause crushingly defeated and himself committing suicide.

However it seems as if history also wanted the Manchu Qing rulers policy of 'basing religious teachings on the divine way' to run its full course. In 1899 the Reform Movement was strangled by the Cixi clique but it was sympathised with by the hated Western powers; the Guangxu emperor's 'political reforms' replayed the cheap tricks of 'basing religious teachings on the divine way' of the line of Manchu emperors, conniving at the high Manchu officials calling on the Boxers, who possessed by their own account the protection of a hundred deities, to 'support the Qing and exterminate the foreigners'. Burning incense drew out the unruly demons, and the Eight Power Allied Army, like a disorderly mob, beat them so that Cixi and her entourage fled in panic westwards, parting company with the imperial capital that had now been occupied twice by the enemy. The Empress Dowager Cixi paid an indemnity of 800,000,000 taels to buy a safe conduct pass for her 'return by imperial carriage' to Beijing. It is said that she always counted on 'having a long memory', if the foreigners told her to stretch out her left foot, she would certainly not dare to stretch out her right foot. As Hu Sheng said, the Great Qing Empire was preserved, but from then on it became 'the court of the foreigners'. What is peculiar is that this empire disintegrated less than three years after Cixi had returned, but after three generations, not only were there still scholars setting out arguments that the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 was unnecessary; there were also people arguing that 'basing

religious teachings on the divine way' of the line of Manchu emperors had the object of establishing political authority and 'great unity'. An antihistorical sermon of this sort does not recall that after the the emperor Qin Shihuang had destroyed six states, Li Si [his chamberlain] offered this advice, 'There is nothing on earth stranger than the art of peace'.

True and the Manchu Qing 'art of peace', if it did not maintain 'basing religious teachings on the divine way' for generations, could make it appear like a dead fish rotting from inside. Seventy years after the Opium War does it still appear to have shining fresh skin?

26 October 2008, at night.

ESSAY 44

The Defeated Heavenly Kingdom

The Taiping rebellion, with Hong Xiuquan and other leaders of the God Worshippers' Society at its head, began on 11th January 1851 (10th of the 12th month of the 30th year of the Daoguang reign of the Qing dynasty) when the standard of rebellion was raised in the village of Jintian in Guiping in Guangxi province. On 19 July 1864 (16th of the 6th month in the 3rd year of the Tongzhi reign) its capital Tianjing [the Heavenly Capital in present day Nanjing] was by attacked by Zeng Guofan's Hunan Army and destroyed, after a total of fourteen years of resistance to the Manchu Qing.

In the past, 'King Cheng defeats the bandits' was the basic yardstick for judging history in mediaeval Chinese orthodoxy. In fact this is also a yardstick in foreign countries. Stalin, the self-proclaimed Leninist, said, 'The victorious cannot be judged, whoever is on the winning side is correct' (see *Mao Zedong zhuan* (1949–1976), Volume 1, page 30).

According to this logic, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom failed and as 'victors', the Manchu regime, including the heads of the Hunan and Huai armies that had fought with all their might and their civilian officials denounced Hong Xiuquan and the others with one voice as 'bandits and robbers', condemning the God Worshippers' Society as a 'heterodox sect' leading to Zeng Guofan's completely unprecedented comment that 'the ethical code of Confucianism is strangely transformed'. This was logical and well argued.

Unfortunately history does not cooperate with logic. In 1860 (Xianfeng 10) when the victors and vanquished of the battle between the Taipings and the Hunan and Huai armies was not yet resolved, the seventh Manchu Qing emperor called in foreign aggressors, the joint Anglo-French army to enter Beijing and had the humiliating record of ensuring that the imperial capital city that he had created fell into the hand of Western invaders. He was in an impossible position and fled north to the temporary imperial palace at Rehe [Jehol] and within a year had died there. Later his younger half brother Prince Gong and his widow plotted to launch a coup d'etat [the Xinyou coup] and at the same time sought peace with the British, French and Russian invaders and signed the humiliating Treaty of Beijing, giving Zeng Guofan a free hand and the authority to direct the civil war. There was serious internal conflict in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom's Heavenly Capital and it had lost its initial vigour. In the end, with support from the British and French mercenary troops [the 'Ever Victorious Army'], the Taiping armies were forced into a corner

and Hong Xiuquan committed suicide at Taicheng. Naturally Zeng Guofan's 'brothers', Zuo Zongtang, Li Hongzhang and others were all created marquises. But can it not be said that the Nian armies, continuing the the resistance of the Taiping to the Qing, still galloped across the Central Plains? As the Taiping had been wiped out in the south, was it possible to return to centralised control by the Manchu Qing regime? It was not. It might be easy to control mountains and rivers, but the real new masters were the leaders of the Han armies of the Hunan and Huai type.

Supposing that in the civil war with the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Manchu Qing dynasty was genuinely the 'victor', it was Zeng, Zuo Li and other southern Han Chinese warlords who rose abruptly to prominence in the civil war, and this seems to conform more to historical reality.

This of course implies that the empire's traditional state policy of 'Manchu on the inside, Han on the outside' was bankrupt. As far back as 1854 (Xianfeng 4), the Hunan army militia formed by Zeng Guofan fought for the first time outside its home province when it attacked and defeated the Taiping armies and recaptured Wuhan. The Xianfeng emperor was delighted to hear the news of the victory and his attention was drawn by the Han Chinese Grand Councillor Qi Junzao to the fact that Zeng, who ranked as a Vice President of one of the Boards was at his ancestral home in mourning for a parent; he had retired from his official position and returned to private life. However this famous 'commoner' would appear personally if called, and could gather ten thousand men to follow him into battle, 'so that he did not go against the fortunes of the state'. This state of affairs delighted the emperor, but it came to nothing, and from this point onwards Manchu officials strengthened their supervision over Zeng Guofan, Hu Linyi and others. If it had not been for a letter received by the emperor from the Grand Chamberlain Sushun, obeying a secret report via a Han Chinese assistant, Zuo Zongtang would have been executed and Zeng and Hu might have been deprived of their military authority. After the death of the Xianfeng emperor, Sushun and others were executed and the leadership of Zeng, Hu, Zuo and others was rendered ineffective by intractable subordinates. How should that part of history be regarded? It appears to be worth re-interpreting.

But using the theory of 'King Cheng defeats the bandits', or Stalin's informed opinion that 'victors cannot be judged', to interpret the history of the defeat and destruction of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom is rather troublesome, and the difficulty lies with late Qing scholar-officials. A quarter of a century before the Opium War between the Qing and the British, He Zizhen had already called on the Qing court to 'reform itself', arguing that if the empire did not

take the initiative and carry out structural reforms from top to bottom, it would inevitably fall into the old rut of dynastic change. Unfortunately his prediction was confirmed time and time again by the histories of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Reform Movement of 1898.

So much for the history of the failure of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. After the excitement triggered among the Qing gentry by the occupation of the Heavenly Capital, Tianjing, had passed, literati in the court and the country generally began to reflect on how long this empire could continue. As a rule there were both optimistic and pessimistic views. The optimists mainly came from the two lists of Hanlin or examinations supervisors and included Zhang Peilun, Zhang Zhidong, and Chen Baochen. They yearned for the times of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong as an alternative to present day politics, denounced corruption and attacked the elite, especially Li Hongzhang who was targeted as an 'insignificant man dealing with foreign matters'. They were therefore known as the 'gentlemen uncontaminated by power'. They never expected that they personally would be used by the Empress Dowager Cixi and would become the tools of a game of stratagems between Cixi and Prince Gong. In the period of overlap between the reigns of Tongzhi and Daoguang, Cixi had her wishes fulfilled and repeatedly admonished or advised the government, so it became the turn of this group of 'gentlemen uncontaminated by power' to be out of luck. Because of their faction's line on the Sino-French War, Cixi made them scapegoats and blamed them for the failure of the conflict. Along with this in 1884, apart from Zhang Zhidong who tried to fathom out Cixi's intentions, the 'party uncontaminated by power' were completely overwhelmed.

What is bizarre is that subsequently the 'evaluation' of Hong Xiuquan moved from overall negative to qualified positive. The crushing defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5 was the cause of the 'public vehicle petition' by candidates in the civil service examinations. Kang Youwei and his supporters agitated for the self-reform of the empire, in practice advocating overall Westernisation and criticising Zeng Guofan. Tan Sitong, a martyr in the movement that became known as the Hundred Days Reform, in 'Studies of Benevolence' criticised his Hunan fellow provincial and 'brother' Zeng, for cruelty exceeding that of ruthless butchers when storming the Heavenly Capital.

However in the late Qing, Sun Yat-sen was thoroughly in favour of revising the evaluation of Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. In the year of the Sino-Japanese War, this young Cantonese sent a written statement to Li Hongzhang, calling for political reform and later launched the Revive China Society. He rejected the idea that the Boxers were stupid and struggled

to find sympathisers inside and outside China. His thoughts were first seen in *Sun Yixian* published in Shanghai in 1903 (Guangxu 29). This booklet was written by a Japanese supporter, Miyazaki Tōten who was also known as Torazō Miyazaki and was translated into Chinese by Zhang Shijian who sometimes used the pen name 'Yellow in China Yellow' (Huangzhonghuang) with a specially written foreword by Zhang Taiyan (Binglin). It spread like wildfire. Zhang Taiyan had published 'Critique of Kang Youwei's Writings on Revolution, (a preface to Zou Rong's *Revolutionary Army*) directly criticising the emperor and calling for China to be saved by revolution. He was arrested by the Qing government and put in the Xilao Prison in the Shanghai Concession, thereby causing a sensation throughout the world. In prison just as the Chinese revolution was in distress, he wrote a brief foreword for *Sun Yixian*; he compared Sun Yat-sen to the emperor Han Gaozu, saying that he strongly advocated 'revolution to expel the Manchus', directly continuing the cause of Zheng Chenggong and Hong Xiuquan, and would become the people's leader of the future. Was this not the highest affirmation of Sun Yat-sen? From this Sun Yatsen cast off the reputation of being a bandit on the wanted list of the Qing court, and acquired the reputation of someone who transformed the ideas of Hong Xiuquan's Taiping Heavenly Kingdom into making the people the masters.

After a hundred years it seems as if the cherished wishes of Zhang Taiyan, and the Sun Yat-sen he eulogised for a 'revolution to expel the Manchus' have been granted. But has the corruption of the late Qing period that they so abominated been eliminated?

10 November 2008, at night.

ESSAY 45

Issachar Roberts and Hong Xiuquan

The American Baptist missionary Issachar J. Roberts was preaching in Guangzhou in 1847 (Daoguang 27) when he received two visitors from Huaxian in Guangdong province who were interested in 'studying religion'. One of these stayed for several weeks and explained to him that ten years previously while he had been ill he had had a dream in which he had 'ascended to heaven'; he wished to be baptised but did not obtain consent for this.

Six years later (in 1853 or Xianfeng 3), Roberts, by then in Hong Kong, read a document written by a Swedish pastor of the Basel Mission in China, Theodore Hamburg, that made him realise that the 'student of religion' had been the Heavenly King of the Taipings, Hong Xiuquan, who had that year established his capital in Nanjing and that his companion in 1847 had been Hong Ren'gan, a future Heavenly King. Roberts then wrote a letter to the publication of the London China Missionary Society, excitedly giving an account of this 'important discovery'. The following year Hamburg again interviewed Hong Ren'gan and the resulting article was translated into English and published in Hong Kong, under the title of 'The Vision of Hong Xiuquan and the Guangxi Insurrection'. This created great excitement among Westerners inside and outside China about 'the true face of Hong Xiuquan's revolution'.

There are two points in Roberts's open letter that are worth noting. One is that Hong Xiuquan and the others 'did not have plans for an uprising at first but, because of oppression by officialdom and the military and cruelty towards us, we could not knuckle under and no other route was open to us'. That is to say that it was a popular rebellion in response to official oppression, which is repeatedly confirmed in researches on the history of the Taiping rebellion. The second point is Roberts's inference of the more important objectives of the God Society (he omitted the character for 'worship' which would have given the correct name of God Worshippers' Society): 'They are not revolting against the government but rather struggling for religious freedom and are really seeking to overturn the worship of idols'. After Hong Xiuquan's departure from the city of Guangzhou he set up the God Worshippers' Society with Feng Yunshan and others. Their first acts were the removal and destruction of the ancestral tablets in private schools and the memorial tablets to the ancestors in houses, and a declaration that, apart from the 'Heavenly Father and Heavenly Brother', all other images were false idols. This seemed to be proof of Roberts' point.

Roberts was broadly sympathetic to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and considered it to have had an effect on a par with the Opium War between the Qing and the British: 'The intentions of heaven are wonderful; the results of the foreign war exceeded all expectations in that it led to the opening of China. If the present revolution overtuning the worship of idols opens doors, then the Gospel will be spread throughout the whole of China and its result could be just as wonderful.' Therefore he endorsed Hong Xiuquan's subordinates, 'respecting them as prophets or great masters of religion'.

Because of this, in the eighth year of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, 1866, because he knew that Hong Reng'an had been ennobled as Shield King by his cousin Hong Xiuquan and put in charge of the administration of the Heavenly Kingdom, Roberts travelled north, firstly to Suzhou to meet the Loyal King, Li Xiucheng, and was then received in the Heavenly Capital by younger men of the Hong family. He joined the revolution; he was not appointed to an office but became the Imperial Tutor [*dishi*] and as a 'foreign brother' achieved unprecedented authority in the Heavely Capital. In the third month of the following year the Heavenly King issued a special edict protecting foreigners who 'did not assist evil spirits', instructing that cases involving crimes committed by foreigners within the boundaries of the Heavenly Kingdom, would be heard jointly by Roberts and the consular officials of the foreign states and then handed over to the Heavenly King for adjudication. Relations with foreign merchants were also under Roberts' management with the assistance of the consular officials. This implies that he had effectively become the head of foreign affairs for the Heavenly Kingdom.

However Roberts was becoming unhappy in the Heavenly Capital and after fifteen months, January 1862 by the Western calendar (2nd month of Xianfeng 11, by which time the Tongzhi emperor was already on the throne), he left the Heavenly Capital, feeling dejected. According to a letter of his that was published in the *North China Herald* on 8 February, he had broken off relations with the revolution and the reason was that he could no longer endure the tyrannical rule of the Heavenly King or ill-treatment by the Shield King.

What is all this about? Accoding to Roberts, when he first arrived in the Heavenly Captial he was extremely disappointed by the way that Hong Xiuquan handled questions of politics, commerce and religion:

> My attitude underwent an earth shattering transformation and now I have sufficient reason to be opposed to them, just as I had had sufficient reason to support them previously. I definitely ought to oppose Hong Xiuquan from a personal point of view, he was always extremely amicable towards me, but I believe that he is a madman, completely incapable

> of operating such a disorderly and undesirable regime properly. He and his cold and detached kings are completely incapable of organising a government; the population cannot benefit from this and there is no comparison with the old imperial government.

This is followed by a specific denunciation of Hong Xiuquan's personal character and his political actions. Unfortunately in comparing historical explanations of the various internal conflicts in the latter period of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, we have no way of judging whether Roberts' explanation conforms to the historical reality. For example he says that in the Heavenly Capital religious tolerance and free churches were 'just a farce', 'they were only a mechanism for promoting and disseminating the government religion', making him (Hong Xiuquan) on the same level as Jesus, and forming a father-son relationship with the Lord God and creating a lord above all living creatures'. Setting aside the writer's religious bias, it is difficult to say that his verdict on the later part of Hong Xiuquan's life, gained as it was from observations at close range, is not correct.

What is surprising is Roberts' denunciation of the Shield King. Hong Ren'gan was involved in the creation of the God Worshippers' Society but was not able to get to Jintian in time for the uprising there. Afterwards he passed through Hong Kong and Shanghai and made contact with Westerners in China, having suffered the British-style gentry education, and after experiencing many hardships and difficulties arrived in the Heavenly Capital, where he moved into the government and wrote *A New Manual on Aids to Government* [*Zizheng xinpian*], which has often led writers of later generations to regret that he had no opportunity to realise his ideas of modernisation during the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Who would have thought that in Roberts' account, this Heavenly Kingdom prime minister would be seen to have another side, 'under the influence of his unfeeling and cold-blooded demonic older relative, he would have no misgivings at all about God in front of him'? He murdered Roberts's servant with a sword in front of him and continually insulted Roberts himself.

> He beat me like a violent lunatic, grabbed the stool that I was sitting on, and threw dregs of his tea in my face, took hold of me and shook me violently, and hit my right cheek with the palm of his hand. Respecting the instructions of my Lord I turned away and with his right hand he suddenly boxed my ears so hard that they rang. Seeing that his words and actions could not anger me towards him seemed to make him more furious, thereupon he mauled me like a mad dog, completely forgetting himself.

According to Roberts, he thought at the time, 'If he behaves as outrageously as this in broad daylight, what will he be like under the cover of darkness?' and 'who dares in honesty to meet him?' So he lost all hope in preaching to the Heavenly Kingdom and had no option but to leave.

There are gaps in history and to this day we do not know the inside story of why Roberts and Hong Ren'gan lost touch. However the rough treatment by the Heavenly Kingdom's Prime Minister and the religious enlightenment that the Heavenly King had previously received from this foreign priest are not a basis for cooking up a story, even if Roberts's accounts may have been exaggerated. Initially Western scholars and merchants in China had been inclined to support the Manchu Qing suppression of the Taiping. European and American missionaries who were an important influence on Western scholars and merchants, in view of Roberts's teachings, all switched to become a rebel faction opposing the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Is that not logical?

It is difficult to explain the feelings of gratitude at separation and reunion between Issachar Jacox Roberts and Hong Xiuquan, and then between Roberts and Hong Ren'gan. This was not just a matter of the conduct of individuals and has often been overlooked by writers of modern history.

12 November 2008, at night.

ESSAY 46

Another Look at 'Internal Strife in the Heavenly Capital'

Just three years after the Taiping Heavenly kingdom designated Nanjing as their Heavenly Capital in the autumn of 1856 (Xianfeng 6) serious conflict arose within the Taiping family.

In that year the Taiping armies had won more battles than they had lost in their conflict with the Hunan army and attacked the two main Qing military camps north and south of the Yangzi river. The siege of the Heavenly Capital was raised and the situation of the revolution could be described as excellent. Yang Xiuqing, the Eastern King, was in overall charge of key military and political matters; he was proud of his successes and had become complacent. He had opposed Hong Xiuquan's criticisms of Confucius, at this time apparently taking the view that rectifying names was the political priority. Therefore he repeatedly used the pretext of the descent of the Heavenly Father to earth to call the Heavenly King into the Eastern King's palace to kneel and hear his oral transmission of the sacred edicts from on high, ordering the Heavenly King to honour him as [the Lord of] 'Ten thousand years' [*wansui*].

The Heavenly King who was indulging in drink and the pursuit of women was confused, and in haste summoned the Northern King, Wei Changhui, and the Assistant King, Shi Dakai, back to the Heavenly Capital to come to his rescue. Wei Changhui immediately returned to the Heavenly Capital with his elite troops and, under cover of night attacked and killed Yang Xiuqing. He also conspired with the King of Yan, Qin Rigang, to trap and kill the Eastern King's own army, altogether killing over 20,000 people, after bloody battles in the Stone City of Nanjing.

It was the turn of the Northern King to act as a tyrant. The Heavenly King's countermeasures were to utilise troops dispatched by the Assistant King to 'rid the emperor of evil ministers' and assassinate the Northern and Yan kings; he also indulged the involvement in politics of the two kingly brothers, compelling Shi Dakai who had been in charge for less than six months to leave in a fit of pique. From then onwards the Heavenly Kingdom was divided.

Hong Xiuquan had provoked conflict between the three kings Yang, Wei and Shi, and although it might have been a bad move it had the unexpected effect of being able to kill three birds with one stone. He finally had the first taste of dictatorship, concentrating spiritual and political authority in one person. He

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fabricated a 'pre-proclamation' saying that nineteen years previously when he had been ill his soul had travelled to heaven, and as was already known, 'the Lord or emperor was created by me and the military advisers were also created by me'. [Luo Ergan *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, Zhonghua shuju, 1991 p. 981.

The literal meaning of these two terms is not difficult to understand. 'Lord' is the Emperor of the Heavenly Kingdom: in 1851 (Xianfeng 1) Hong Xiuquan had been enthroned as the Heavenly King of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in Wuxuandong county, Guangxi. At the same time Yang Xiuqing and Su Xiaogui had been appointed left and right Marshals respecively and, following the practice of the first Ming emperor Taizu the post of prime minister was abolished.

The question after the dust settled on the 'internal strife in the heavenly capital' is why Hong Xiuquan falsified his 'pre-proclamation'?

I agree with the general interpretation of scholars of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom who take the view that in the 'internal strife in the Heavenly Capital', Hong Xiuquan no longer had confidence in any 'brothers' with other surnames and was only prepared to trust members of the Hong family. However it is my view that this psychology of Hong Xiuquan is closely connected to the fact that, as founder of the God Worshippers' Society he never became the number one authority in the sect and after the Taiping Rebellion was called the Heavenly King but that this was in name only and did not reflect his real power.

Seeing that historians of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom have over time produced an immense collection of books, it is only necessary to set out the historical facts briefly here.

1. In 1843 (Guangxu 23) Hong Xiuquan and Feng Yunshan and others founded the God Worshippers' Society, relying on Feng Yunshan's perseverance in spreading its teachings among ordinary Hakka families in the Zijing Mountains of Guangxi, which took five years to create the requisite climate.
2. Because Feng Yunshan and others were arrested in 1847 (Guangxu 27) and the following year Yang Xiuqing and Xiao Chaogui, imitating Hong and Feng's method of 'establishing the teachings in the way of the gods', continually used the ruse of the Heavenly Father or Heavenly Brother possessing their bodies, and by means of divine edicts put in order the feelings of the members of their secret society, and declared that Hong Xiuquan had become the second son of God.
3. in 1849 (Daoguang 29), facing the fait accompli that Yang Xiuqing and Xiao Chaogui were acting as sorcerers, Hong Xiuquan was obliged to

acknowledge in public that they really had a distinctive function in spreading the word of God or Jesus, the effect being that his position as the second son of God gained the approval of Yang and Xiao.

4. The God Worshippers' Society was suppressed by Manchu Qing officialdom and decided to revolt, planning the sacred edict of the Jintian round camp or stockade, which was also issued by Yang and Xiao in the name of the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Brother.
5. In 1851, Xianfeng 1, the God Worshippers' Society in the Wuxuan and Dongxian areas of Guangxi province proclaimed the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (*Taiping Tianguo*) with Hong Xiuquan and the Heavenly King, who then honoured Yang Xiuqing and Xiao Chaogui as right and left Marshals. From this time onwards all orders issued were also in the name of these two Principal Marshals.
6. In the eighth month of the same year at Yong'an, the Heavenly Kingdom ennobled five kings, the East, West, South, North and Assistant Kings. Their grades or rank orders [in comparison with the ten thousand years salutation for the Heavenly King] were: nine thousand years for the Eastern King Yang Xiuqing, eight thousand years for the Western King, Xiao Chaogui; the Southern King, Feng Yunshan, the founding father of the God Worshippers' Society, had a lower status of seven thousand years; the Northern King, Wei Changhui, was six thousand years and the Assistant King, Shi Dakai, five thousand years, all of them controlled by the Eastern King. It is clear that the Eastern King from the outset was the Cao Cao or Zhuge Liang of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and the Heavenly King from the beginning was similar to the Han Dynasty Emperor Xiandi in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* or Adou, the last emperor of the Shu Han state.
7. Right up to the 'internal strife in the Heavenly Capital' of August 1856 (Xianfeng 6) the spiritual and military authority of the Heavenly Kingdom and even the authority of the garrison were all under the control of the Eastern King, Yang Xiuqing, so that Qing officials and Westerners in China frequently took him to be the real Heavenly King of the Taipings.

The 'internal strife in the Heavenly Capital' from Wei Changhui's murder of Yang Xiuqing to the expulsion of Shi Dakai, lasted for more than six months (from 2 September 1856 to 2 June 1857), and naturally weakened the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, setting it on a downhill course. Within the Heavenly Kingdom, the Heavenly King, Hong Xiuquan, realised long standing wishes and dreams which he had had for most of his life; he became a despotic monarch.

He stated that 'the Lord is made my creation and the Marshals are also my creation', whether or not he was comparing himself to Zhu Yuanzhang [the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty] who stripped ministers of power I do not know, but this is a different explanation from that of Luo Ergang.

His *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* that was published in Luo Ergang's later years is a major work in four volumes and 1,500,000 characters. It was the result of over forty years of work collecting and studying material on the Taiping. Documents were critically examined and he also set out the historical facts meticulously. Only the historical viewpoint, compared with his earlier works, emphasied 'implementing the political objective' (see the preface to that book) which led me to feel, after reading it that not only was he using the argument to direct the history, he was frequently, in the crucial aspect of 'criticism', replacing history with theory.

For example in passing judgment on the 'internal strife in the Heavenly Capital', in Luo Ergang's earlier treatise, Luo had traced its cause to Yang Xiuqing 'pressing for the honour of ten thousand years', but judging this case in the *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, he mechanically applied Mao Zedong's argument on the state and political systems in 'On New Democracy', stressing that it was not Yang Xiucheng's fault; 'Like the attitude of the landlord class rulers, counter-revolutionary elements and foreign invaders of that era towards the main military commander Yang Xiuqing's control of political power in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, he used the terms "usurpation" or "overstepping his authority" '; according to most recent researches a military responsibility system was originally the political system of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

According to the author's own preface, these words written on National Day in 1985 directly negate the period of the high tide of ideological liberation in the 'Cultural Revolution'. Luo Ergan's aim in 'serving politics' was to perist in valuing the application of the theory of class struggle to the 'internal strife in the Heavenly Capital' and at the same time criticise Yang Xiuqing's defiance of his superiors and rebellion from the original focal point, and confirm that Yang Xiuqing scrupulously abided by the political structure of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and protected its 'democratic centralism', compared with Hong Xiuquan who was the arch criminal responsible for smashing this system of government. As has been described earlier, from the point of view of historical efficacy, Hong Xiuquan reaped the benefit of the conflict between three Kings. But as a historical explanation of history, did Hong Xiuquan have his own plans and for a step by step direction of the abolition of the bodies managing military and political affairs, 'the military responsibility system', thus abolishing

the Heavenly Kingdom's 'democratic centralism'? Again, as has been mentioned previously, this Heavenly King was in all respects passive, but gained mastery only by striking after the enemy had struck, sacrificing the interests of the Heavenly Kingdom in exchange for the dominant position of a personal dictatorship. He finally became the prisoner of the Stone City [Nanjing] and embarked on the route of no return, wishing for his own death, which might be said to be historical inevitability.

20 November 2008.

ESSAY 47

Plundering the Image of Taiping History Overseas

The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was defeated and destroyed in 1864 and thenceforth the government and public of the Manchu Qing period only ever referred to it in curses.

It was not only a negation of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. The founders of this Heavenly Kingdom, with their words so lofty and their actions so brutal, their promises of equality and strict ban on special privileges were in inverse proportion to the reality, more and more causing the peasants who wished to be liberated from all kinds of oppression to lose hope. By the Republic in villages in the south of Jiangsu the 'long hairs' were rarely praised.

However there was also invective in private documents of Qing officials that refer to the story of the collapse of the Taiping. For example the God Worshippers' Society was disparaged as a 'heterodox sect'. Of course Hong Xiuquan calling himself the second son of God and Yang Xiuqing's constant playing on the presence of God were both absurd, but since the long line of Qing emperors called themselves the Sons of Heaven, worshipped Confucius and the Buddha and especially Shamanism, which was the more absurd? To curse the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom for creating special privileges for different ranks cannot be said to be wrong. In comparison however with the hereditary privileges maintained by the Manchus for their Eight Banners, turning all bannermen into a parasitic group, so that the descendants of the Eight Banners were referred to as insect pests [*machong* in Chinese which is close enough to Manchu to be unambiguous and probably refers to a moth-like insect which destroys clothing and books], which was more deserving of the curses?

The move of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom towards self-destruction was the same thing, but the Manchu Qing rulers, at the same time as cursing the Taiping did not curse themselves, or they said what was pleasanter on the ears, that they were 'accepting the lessons of history', and on the contrary concealing their faults for fear of criticism, which was also the same thing, but no more will be said about that.

Therefore a generation later, thirty years after the collapse of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, its history of revolt suddenly emerged form the dust-covered memories which were turned into glorious revolutionary precedents and made people take notice. The first to resurrect the old events from this angle

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was Sun Wen—Sun Yat-sen—who, another generation later, was revered as the Sun Zhongshan, the 'father of the Republic'.

It is said that when Sun Yat-sen was young he considered himself to be the 'Second Hong Xiuquan', but later had a Western education and became a Christian. In 1894 (Guangxu 20) he wrote to Li Hongzhang, proposing reforms, all of which involved Westernisation. When these were rejected he put all his energy into a 'revolution to oust the Manchus' through a secret organisation, the Revive China Society (*Xingzhonghui*), plotted two revolts in Guangdong and Guangxi and was put on the wanted list by the Qing court, so that in 1903 Zhang Taiyan [Zhang Binglin] sang his praises as a 'people's monarch' in the footsteps of Zheng [Chenggong] and Hong [Xiuquan]. He became a leader of the revolution against the Qing, and like Hong Xiuquan was besmirched with the name of head of a heterodox sect.

In 1925 (Minguo 14) after the death of Sun Yat-sen, the Guomindang and the CCP went from cooperation to split, one of the reasons being how the peasant movement should be regarded. Mao Zedong, who firmly believed that the peasant wars were essential, , sought assistance from the teachings of previous leaders in order to prove that the peasant movement was 'excellent', and naturally took a positive view of Hong Xiuquan and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. In fact he did not really admire Hong Xiuquan. After the 'southern Anhui incident', he heard about *Spring and Autumn of the Heavenly Kingdom*, a play by Yang Hansheng, which used history to cast light on conditions at the time. Criticising it he said, 'The position of Yang Xiuqing is extremely important, controlling the military and political power of the Heavenly Kingdom. The murder of Yang by Wei Chenghui had the support of Hong Xiuquan; Hong had a great responsibility that cannot be shrugged off (see *Mao Zedong and Chinese Literature* Chongqing Press, 2000, p. 251). Needless to say in his public expositions and arguments, he always commended Hong Xiuquan and in addition promoted the construction of a thread of peasant war histories from Cheng Sheng to Hong Xiuquan.

Long ago Mao Zedong proposed changing 'revolutionary pragmatism' into 'revolutionary utilitarianism' ('Speech to the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in *Selected Works*). Subsequently, according to the 'established principle' he adopted Zhu Yuanzhang's old tactics for becoming emperor, taking whatever is useful personally as the yardstick, continually bathing the intelligentsia in water that grew hotter and hotter, until arousing the contemporary Boxers and Red Lanterns to attack those so called bourgeois intellectuals who had not transformed themselves sufficiently. But it was scholars of literary history who frequently bore the brunt of this. It was of course extremely effective, for

example the majority of those employed in research on the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom after the criticisms of the two Hus (Hu Shi and Hu Feng) made 'serving the government' their chief consideration for fear of trying to fathom out the sacred imperial wish.

On the question of so-called susceptibility, especially to the 'spiritual opium' transmitted from the West, the religious nature of the God Worshippers' Society cannot be avoided; rather it has to be bypassed. In chapter twenty of Luo Ergang's *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* he emphasises from the very beginning, the 'teachings of the Lord' and the God Worshippers' Society as the religious organisation of the Taiping, distinguishing between the God Worshippers' Society as the name of the organisation and the 'teachings of the Lord' as their religion. In this he settled something that previous writers seem to have forgotten, because they all spoke of the unity of politics and religion, and using false spiritual edicts in establishing the state as indicating the limitations of the history of the Heavenly Kingdom. Are ideas like this appropriate? I have read Luo's work over and over again and have discovered internal contradictions in his arguments where he is trying to prove that the God Worshippers' Society was a revolutionary organisation wrapped around the 'teachings of the Lord' like a cloak, and that these teachings were a tool of the Taiping revolution, and 'completely different from Christianity'. Is that not the same as saying that the God Worshippers' Society and the 'teachings of the Lord' were one and the same? It is necessary to use the words of the Yuan dynasty dramatist, to describe the feelings or experience behind the readings: 'If you don't speak I am clear, the more you speak the more muddled I am'.

I have some sympathy with Luo Ergang. He took Fan Wenlan's half finished work, *China's Modern History*, as the model of a Marxist-Leninist history of the Taiping and followed Fan Wenlan's advice to use the historical theories of Mao Zedong as support in harmonising with Stalin's 'directives' on the Chinese revolution. His *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* that was published in 1937 argued that the Taiping was a 'peasant revolution' and not surprisingly this did not endear him to his teacher Hu Shi, who criticised the book for 'failing to avoid contemporary fashion' (Hu Shi *Diary* 21 February 1937). Later he completely entered in to the fashion of the times and after criticising Hu Shi, turned his attention to applying the dogma of Stalin and Mao Zedong which emphasised 'history serving politics'.

Was Stalinism really a development of Marx? For example all of his life Marx constantly pointed out that class struggle was not his invention and later the long essay by the Russian Marxist Plekhanov entitled 'The initial stage of the theory of class struggle' confirmed this. However Mao Zedong on the basis of Stalin's dogmas took the so called class struggle perspective—'in class struggle

some classes win and some die out. This is history, the history of civilisation over thousands of years. Those who understand history from this perspective are called historical materialists and those who stand on the other side are historical idealists' (*Selected Works* Volume 4). This became the quintessence of the Marxist materialist historical viewpoint, but obviously did not conform to historical reality. Unfortunately Fan Wenlan believed in Stalin and Mao Zedong's class struggle standpoint, which originated in Marx yet was higher than Marx; he also spared no effort in using it to rewrite Chinese history, first establishing the theory and then seeking evidence to support it. In his early years he was involved in down to earth study, devoting himself to evidence for what he said, but since he had entered into the formal set pattern of theory-led history, the general direction of his historical writing could only be a search for materials to force into [the pattern], which was not appropriate for the history that Fan and Luo were writing. Luo Ergang followed in the footsteps of Fan Wenlan and researched history in great detail, constructing systems which inevitably reflected the correct interpretation of the peasant revolution, and even got bogged down in making out the case for its defence, almost a pincer attack. I feel sorry for Luo Ergan, spitting blood and working his heart out for forty years to complete his *History of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* with a deep foundation, but the building erected over it cannot resist a storm.

Clearly this is only one aspect of the history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and over recent years other explanations have appeared that are more and more inclined to refute it. It is a good thing to have divergent views and, as Marx said, 'truth is established by debate'. But what has been raised previously should sort out the true face of Qing history, and also as Marx has said, 'the facts of history emerge from setting out the contradictions'. It is a pity that the different theories about the Taiping in recent years either denounced their 'heterodox' religion, or criticised them for cultural destruction as 'burners of books and buriers of scholars; or argued that it does not deserve to be called a 'peasant war'. This is only denunciation and the so-called proofs or demonstrations do not accord with this or that straight line of logic; you say yes and I say no. The details of that follow the fashion, or go with the prevailing wind. Does determining the direction of the wind count as being up to date? If one truly believes that from the Kings of the Han River to Qian Daxin of the Qing dynasty, all emphasised 'seeking truth from facts' in their scholarly work, then it is empty talk to say that history is full of conjectures. It is the same with smashing traditions that cannot be believed as there is no proof, and using past trends to add to the confusion.

24 November 2008, before dawn.

ESSAY 48

Zeng Guofan Gasps at 'Strange Changes to the Confucian Code'

Drawing support from the blind alley of 'establishing the teachings on the basis of the way of the spirits', peasants raised the standard of revolt: from the anti-Qin rebellion of Chen Sheng and Wu Guang at the end of the 3rd century BC and through the revolts of the dynasties of the middle ages it had become a frequent strategy. Later the relations between the various dynasties and the outside world expanded continuously and religions originally produced in the ancient civilisations of Asia and Europe gradually made their way into China; some seeped into the general population to become secret religious societies of various complexions that went against the mainstream Confucian code. From the Ming and Qing periods onwards, the White Lotus Society obstinately persisted in its many manifestations.

In the middle of the 19th century, Hong Xiuquan drew inspiration from 'establishing the teachings on the basis of the way of the spirits', including worshipping an alien religion in the God Worshippers' Society that he, Feng Yunshan and others had established, drawing the multitudes to rise in rebellion, which was not a pioneering historical undertaking. If converting to Christianity implied 'seeking truth from the West', two and a half centuries previously, during the late Ming, Xu Guangqi, Li Zhicao, Yang Tingjun, Wang Zheng and others received from the reformist member of the Society of Jesus in the Roman Catholic Church, Matteo Ricci, the 'true meaning of God' and contemporary science. Hong Xiuquan and his followers were also approaching the 'Western truth' but hardly with 'great foresight'. Did the God Worshippers' Society created by Hong and his men really have the historical characteristic of establishing the teachings on the basis of the way of the spirits'? In fact it did not. In January 1854 (Qing Xianfeng 4) their deadly enemy Zeng Guofan led the newly created Hunan army into Guangdong and issued a 'Proclamation to the Guangdong Rebels', denouncing the religious line of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. He attacked their overturning of the Confucian code and its replacement by Christianity and criticised their policies of egalitarianism—calling each other brother or sister and permitting only God to be referred to as father—and roundly denounced their practice of declaring all land to belong to God so that it could not be cultivated by an individual family. The Taiping rebellion he said, had swept away thousands of years of tradition in one fell

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swoop and was not only an attack on the Qing dynasty but opened the way for undesirable changes in the Confucian code and the rejection of the teachings of Confucius and Mencius.

What Zeng Guofan was describing was vey similar to the utopian socialism that Marx and Engels had depicted in their *Communist Manifesto* 6 years previously in 1848. The realisation of the asceticism and egalitarianism of the God Worshippers' Society, even if coarse, crude and superficial, was more radical than that of Robert Owen and Charles Fourrier. Owen only attempted to establish special areas for migrants within the country to try out his ideas, and Fourrier wanted to establish a socialist migrant district which was restricted to planning, but Hong Xiuquan and his supporters actually used violent means to convert sixteen provinces of China's interior into the Heavenly Kingdom as a proving ground. Therefore these words of Zeng Guofan's are a condemnation of Hong and Yang Xiuqing, which is not to say that he criticised the effectiveness of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom wearing the cloak of Christianity carrying out a Chinese style utopia. Mao Zedong listed Hong Xiuquan as the number one individual after the Opium War who was 'seeking truth from the West', and maybe Mao's fellow countryman Zeng Guofan, who he admired in his youth, learned of the words and deeds of the leader of the Heavenly Kingdom. Later, on the basis of the direct logic of 'whoever opposes the enemy I will support', he characterised Hong Xiuquan as undergoing great hardships in seeking truth from the West, only not mentioning that Hong Xiuquan acknowledged that those truths were equivalent to a Christianity on the model of [the evangelical tract] *Good Words for the Exhortation of Mankind*.

Hong Xiuquan promoted the idea that the Manchus, the 'kings of hell', were the main enemy, and argued that the political and religious legacy of successive Manchu Qing emperors was entirely destructive. Such iconoclasm excited Christian missionaries who took the view that it opened the way for the propagation of the Gospel (as with Issachar J. Roberts and Hong Xiuquan). Obviously it inspired Mao Zedong even more. If this seems unbelievable, consult the famous article, 'Report on an Investigation into the Peasant Movement in Hunan'. In it Mao speaks approvingly of fourteen great things achieved by the peasant associations, especially the detailed descriptions of overturning traditions of religious authority, just as in the modern edition of Zeng Guofan's writings, the difference being only in Zeng Guofan's inversion of the judgment of the value of the rebels destruction of the temples and contempt for religion, from all round negation to all round approval.

For many years the history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was the preferred territory for illustrious scholars. From documentary research to revising and editing, it was as if there was nothing left to do, even with such details as

whether Hong Xiuquan had a beard or not. Evaluation of the personnel system or military arrangements of the Heavenly Kingdom varied widely, but after Mao Zedong's classic directive on explanatory notes there was no leeway in the debate. On the relationship between God Worshippers' Society and Christianity, although there was little discussion, there were many misinterpretations and certainly no avoidance of the question whether religion was 'spiritual opium', and whether Christianity was a kind of a tool, a minefield in the West's invasion of China. Weakening the religious nature of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, means that the God Worshippers' Society could be described as 'the amalgam of Chinese and Western religious and feudal superstitions' and this has become the general explanation in mainstream history. However in reviewing Zeng Guofan's views of 'strange changes to the Confucian code' at that time, it is not clear that this is 'overturning history again'.

15 November 2008.

ESSAY 49

Two Sages: Washington and Napoleon (I)

Looking at the history of sages in the Qing dynasty, one can discover that by the late Qing two Westerners could be included in the list of sages. One was the first American president Washington who died in 1799, the same year as the Qianlong emperor. The other was the French Emperor Napoleon I who died in exile in 1821.

The worship of these two reached such a height at the end of the Qing dynasty that when the anti-Qing revolutionary Zhang Taiyan, who regarded himself as 'heaven sent to preserve the essence of Chinese culture', published (Guangxu 29) his *Refutation of Kang Youwei on Revolution* in 1903 in which he directly criticised the emperor, he referred to them respectfully as the 'two sages Washington and Napoleon'.

Originally in the dynasties of the middle ages which were characterised by multi-ethnicity and multiple religions, if foreign religions could be legitimised, then the followers of those teachings were permitted to worship foreign sages; often the monarchs indulged in those kinds of superstition. The Manchu emperors who practiced shamanism and venerated the Buddhist Bodhisattva of the Western Heaven and at the same time the local deity, Guanyu, are obvious examples.

In fact in twelfth century Jiangsu, over which the Southern Song retained sovereignty, the scholar Lu Jiuyuan who was opposed to the Neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi, used the logic of 'unity of mind and ritual' to deduce that 'everywhere in the four seas' there were sages, thus contradicting the theory that sages were a special product of 'Chinese' Confucianism. One of the principal parts of the doctrines of Wang Yangming which were current in the 16th century was the use of Mencius's 'all people can be like the legendary emperors Yao and Shun' and making a somewhat farfetched comparison with what Confucius's disciple Zixia (Bu Shang) had written, that 'all men within the four seas are brothers', and promoting the idea that all people could become sages, including foolish men and women. Ignoring philosophical theories, just looking at the cultural history of the later Ming dynasty; it can be seen that the three incursions of Christianity into China which led Xu Guangqi, Li Zhizao and many other flowers of culture to accept Western science and the Western religion of Matteo Ricci and others disseminating Christian teachings, undoubtedly acted as precursors.

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Therefore the Manchu Qing rulers respected both Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming; this was surely a political ploy, 'using the Han to control the Han'. The three emperors, Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong were all adept at mocking and deriding false Confucians. By the later 18th century the officials of the Office of the Four Treasuries, Ji Yun, Dai Zhen and others, either joked about or cursed in fury at contemporary Neo-Confucianism, making it absolutely clear that in advocating 'loyalty to the monarch and love for superiors', Zhu Xi's theories were 'exhausted and no longer useful. After a hundred years of tranquillity in Wang Yangming studies there was a reluctant resurgence and this was transformed, perhaps not surprisingly, into an aid to a new round of the import of Western religion and studies to China.

This new round of the incursion of Western religion and studies to China was initiated by missionaries of different sects of European and American Christianity. The advance party was Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society in England and the Prussian, Karl Freidrich Gutzlaff of the Dutch Missionary Society; the American Congregationalist, E.C. Bridgman followed closely behind. They were alarmed by the reaffirmation of the Jiaqing emperor's edict of historical prohibition on Christian missionaries which necessarily affected the struggles of the Jesuits to be allowed to proselytise legally in China during the late Ming and early Qing and the 'Ricci rules', scientific missionary work through the publication of books and pamphlets, while preaching the gospel to the people of China. Morrison's assistant, W. Milne, established a monthly Chinese-language periodical in Malacca in 1815 (Jiaqing 20), which others later imitated, but they did not have the influence of Gutlaff who moved to the London Missionary Society and, after acting as an interpreter for Guangzhou branch of the British East India Company, created the *East West Monthly Examiner* magazine. Its inaugural issue in Guangdong in (Daoguang 13), as has been pointed out by Ge Gongzhen in *History of Journalism in China*, was the first of this type of magazine to be published within the borders of China in modern times. More significantly, as has been detailed by the Singapore scholar Zhuo Nansheng in *The History of the Development of Modern Journalism in China*, when Gutzlaff moved over to the style of proselytising used by Milne and others, 'the emphasis in its content was the introduction of Western knowledge and culture', but it ceased publication. By 1837 (Daoguang 17) it reappeared in cooperation with Gutzlaff's colleague in the Guangzhou branch, J.R. Morrison, the son of Robert Morrision but it finally ceased publication the following year. The reason, according to Zhuo Nansheng, was the imminent outbreak of the Opium War, 'J.R. Morrison had been one of the drafters

of the unequal treaties between China and Britain and Gutzlaff as editor of *East West Monthly Examiner* was the Chinese translator of those treaties'.

In its final year of publication, the *East West Monthly Examiner* introduced its Chinese readers to Napoleon. The issue published in the 8th month of 1837 carried a special article, entitled 'Despot' calling the emperor someone 'who took care of heaven and earth and who had conquered many lands' and continued, 'no other despot compares with Emperor Napoleon of France', concluding that 'if Napoleon were compared with Emperor Qin Shihuang and Khublai Khan of the Yuan dynasty one might say that they were similar but the tyrant Napoleon was the worst by far'. These comparisons were repeated in later issues, but the article 'Despot' emphasised repeatedly that only the British military stood in the way of Napoleon conquering the entire world, providing a foil and using all kinds of tricks to suggest that the British Empire was the strongest among the strong.

Also in 1837 Gutzlaff or J.R. Morrison in another article in that publication entitled 'Discussion' used the form of a short story to introduce the 'star-spangled banner' and the founding sovereign of the United States, George Washington, saying, 'this hero has the heart of a Yao or a Shun'. The following year they published 'Brief Account of the Speeches and Deeds of Washington'. The Taiwanese scholar, Pan Guangzhe, in 'Washington in China—creating a "father of the nation"' [Taibei: Sanmin Shuju, 2006] has pointed out that it was 'the first article in the Chinese speaking world to introduce Washington. However in the following year, 1838, the first ranking American missionary in China, Bridgman, also published a book in Chinese, entitled *Short Account of the United States of America* with a Chinese language publisher in Singapore, which gave a detailed introduction to the process by which the USA achieved independence and its federal nature. Later when Chinese people spoke of Washington, it was generally this that they quoted.

Unwise people might fool themselves that the traditional culture of the Manchu Qing rulers would not prevent its government or certain of its officials doing their best to become proficient in the waya of foreign lands. For example when Lin Zexu at the beginning of 1839, (Daoguang 19), was sent to Guangzhou as Imperial Commissioner to suppress opium, he was not able to identify Turkey as the source of opium traded by American merchants, asking whether it was a place in America. However through sending people frequently to investigate the countries of the foreign merchants, and contact with Bridgman and other American missionaries, he was able to differentiate between British and American merchants. The 'military head', Washington, because he led his

nation's barbarian masses away from Britain to independence was respected as a sage by the Americans. The *Gazetteer of the Four Seas*, that Lin ordered to be compiled, repasted this and added to the traditional material on the history and geography of the West that had been discontinued by the Qing court for a hundred years. Although Lin was made a scapegoat by the Daoguang emperor for the defeat by the British in the war and was deprived of his official position and banished, he had created a mood among seekers after knowledge in the late Qing period.

Closely following the Treaty of Nanjing between Britain and the Qing in 1842, officials in the south who paid close attention to the affairs of European and American countries coincidently wrote accounts of conditions in the outside world. Of the insiders who touched on the historical legacy of Washington and Napoleon, there was *On the United States* (1844) written by Liang Tingnan from Shunde in Guangdong who had served as Lin Zexu's unofficial adviser or consultant; and *Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit* (*Yinghuan zhilüe, 1848*) by Xu Jiyu of Wutai in Shanxi, the official and geographer, who had served as governor of Fujian; and the *Gazeteer and Maps of the Maritime World* (*Haiguo tuzhi*, 1852) in 100 *juan* by Wei Yuan.

Xu Jiyu personally experienced the entire course of the Opium War. After the Treaty of Nanjing, he was promoted from the post of Provincial Treasurer in Fujian to Governor of the Province and took advice from D. Abeel of the Dutch Reformed Church and American Reformed Mission and the British Consul in Fujian, searching for documents on the geography of the Western world and the foreign relations of China, burying his head in his studies for five years and then spending decades writing and rewriting his book. As a result his *Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit* surpassed, as Abeel put it, all previous works and should be in all libraries great and small, particularly for its coverage of political and commercial affairs and especially trade relations between China and the West. His work generated considerable debate in political and academic circles in the Daoguang and Xianfeng reign periods and should not be ignored.

What also should not be ignored was the attitude of Lin Zexu. This hero of opium suppression was exiled to Xinjiang by the Daoguang emperor but later recalled to serve as Governor and Governor-General in the provinces of Shaanxi, Gansu, Yunnan and Guizhou. In 1850 (Daoguang 30) the monarchy changed [with the death of the Daoguang emperor] and under the new Xianfeng emperor he was rehabilitated but he was allowed to resign his official position and return to Fujian on the grounds of ill-health. Was he not the first to have the idea of using the technology of the barbarians to control the

barbarians? However he had just settled in his home province when there was a fierce political attack led by local gentry on Xu Jiyu who was governor of Fujian, the pretext being that Xu had consented to two foreign missionaries settling in the Shengguang temple in the provincial capital to practice medicine. 'Lying on a bed how can other people be permitted to be sound asleep snoring at the side?' Later Lin Zexu was ordered to hurry to Guangxi to suppress the God Worshippers' Society but fell ill and died on the way, so that his Shengguang Temple missionary case remained unsettled. So how can one understand Lin Zexu's attack on Xu Jiyu?

9 December 2008, at night.

ESSAY 50

Two Sages: Washington and Napoleon (II)

The case of the Shenguang Temple and the opposition by Fuzhou gentry to missionaries in the city occurred soon after the Xianfeng emperor ascended the throne. As Mao Haijian has pointed out in *Tianchao de bengkui* (*Collapse of the Celestial Empire*), after the Opium war Lin Zexu was 'the only participant who had contact with the West'. In fact this exemplifies the 'different paths' taken by Lin Zexu and Xu Jiyu.

As has been set out previously, beginning with Xu Guangqi and others in the late Ming, the fact that scholars of the school of Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming studied 'Western learning' and even converted to Western religions is to acknowledge that there are 'sages' similar in feelings and principles all over the world. According to the introduction to the *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty*,

> Xu Jiyu's father, Xu Jundi, had studied the teachings of the Lu and Wang school and Xu Jiyu continued with these teachings. He was devoted to wide-ranging study and was also informed about current affairs. He spent a great deal of time in Fujian and Guangdong and was familiar with the doings of foreigners. He was prudent and cautious, kind and sincere but restrained, and as an official was honest and hardworking.

At that time the school of Wang Yangming was practically a lost art in government circles and among the general public but Xu Jiyu used this philosophical approach to guide his scholarly work, investigating government, cutting down the appointments of highranking officials, and persistently taking seriously the systems of Britain, America etc. and the connection with military strength. Precisely because he was not hampered by prejudice against the barbarians he dared to appreciate the wisdom of Western 'sages'. For example in setting out the history of American independence in *Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit* (*Yinghuan zhilüe*, *1848*), he employed a light touch to describe the inaugural president, Washington, who in spite of pressure to reappoint him for a further term, was determined to relinquish power and yield his position to a democratically elected successor.

It is difficult to accept that such support for Washington came from the pen of a provincial official of the late Qing period, 170 years ago. By contrast, Lin Zexu's attack on Xu Jiyu for implementing the treaty ratified by the emperor,

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'Why from the bottom of my heart should strong people be following the barbarians', echoes the words of advice to the emperor by Zhao Guangyin 880 years previously in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period on how to deal with foreign wars, saying that it was as if 'Lying on a bed how can other people be permitted to be sound asleep snoring at the side?', treating the two medical missionaries just as if it had been the Southern Tang dynasty (937–976).

Wei Yuan's the *Gazeteer and Maps of the Maritime World* (*Haiguo tuzhi*, 1852) was first published in fifty *juan* (volumes) in January 1843 after the Treaty of Nanjing had come into force. Earlier than *Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit* (*Yinghuan zhilüe*, *1848*), its contents were little more than Lin Zexu's *Gazetteer of the Four Seas* with some additional material. Two years later Wei Yuan added another 60 *juan* which his contemporaries considered to be 'mostly supposition [see the 1849 preface to *Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit* by Liu Hong'ao]. Wei Yuan was intelligent and smart and boasted that his book portrayed 'Westerners speaking of the West'; at the same time as 'taking barbarians ideas' from their illustrated books and translations, a great deal was copied from writings old and new from 'Chinese speaking of the West', including *Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit* which had been published twice towards the end of the Daoguang period. The 100 *juan* edition of *Gazeteer and Maps of the Maritime World* (*Haiguo tuzhi*) was published in 1852. The method of its compilation was strange: material was copied, arranged in categories and then put together into a book. There are translations of personal names, place names, concepts, technical terms etc., with few explanations; within the same *juan* different versions of the same terms and the same term with differ versions can be found everywhere. It is clear that Wei Yuan could not or would not even carry out elementary textual organisation; the text was roughly and indiscriminately put together, but it is also obvious that Wei Yuan exercised considerable thought over the original material that he used. The later 100 *juan* edition copied much from *Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit* with over ten sections dealing with European and American history and geography, but in the historical accounts or annotations in Xu Jiyu's original work he referred to structures changing from autocratic to democratic which Wei Yuan expunged. As has previously been mentioned, Xu approved of Washington's initiative in renouncing unlimited presidential terms for a period of time, but in Wei Yuan's 100 *juan* edition, there is no trace of this. Although Wei Yuan's fellow provincial, Zuo Zongtang boasted about it, calling it 'the most advanced in Chinese Confucianism and Western explanations', the fact cannot be concealed that as a compilation of historical material the 100 *juan* book is distinctly mediocre.

Therefore when the Xianfeng emperor was driven out of Beijing by the Anglo-French allied armies and was obliged to established the new Zongli

Yamen [Office of Foreign Affairs] the Manchu and Han nobles and officials who had been making arrangements for 'barbarian affairs' suddenly discovered that they had to brush up their knowledge of the outside world. Therefore the *Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit* (*Yinghuan zhilüe*) and translation of histories and geographies of foreign lands by Robert Morrison and Elijah Bridgman all became priority reading materials, and *Gazeteer and Maps of the Maritime World* (*Haiguo tuzhi*) was more and more left out in the cold; it cannot be said that the choice was at fault.

So foreign countries also had their 'sages' like Washington and their 'despots' like Napoleon, who gradually became well known in the political world. Similarly, *Brief Description of the Ocean Circuit* also became an essential reader for the 'New Learning'.

Is must be pointed out that during the late Qing period, after the Anglo-French United Army had left Beijing, some of the new missionaries in China acted as advisers to official foreign language schools or translation organisations for the Qing court, and others concentrated in the Christian Literature Society or colleges that were run by foreigners in China. The scope and quantity of translations of Western writings published was impressive, and the journal that they founded, *Wanguo gongbao* (*International Bulletin*), introduced contemporary and modern saints and sages and grew steadily in influence. *Outline History of the West* by J.R. Mackenzie, translated jointly by the British missionary Timothy Richard and Cai Erkang became well-known and in 1895 (Daoguang 21) it was published by the Christian Literature Society and immediately became popular in court circles and the population in general. The book detailed the instability of European and American history in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, and its wide readership included the emperor, key officials, provincial governors, scholars and schoolboys in provincial schools. Not only did they get to know about heroes such as Bismarck, Peter the Great Lincoln etc, but the book directly stimulated the hero worship of Napoleon.

Chinese students generally loathe the continuous annexation by Tsarist Russia of the empire's borderlands; they also despised studying the Japanese 'piracy' of pupils attacking the teacher. The Kang Youwei faction in the late Qing tried to persuade the Guangxu emperor to study Peter the Great of Russia and the Meiji Restoration in Japan and carry out 'self-reform' of the empire. Since the 1898 reform movement did not achieve its objectives it did not change the traditional impression of the monarchs of Japan and Russia among scholars and the general population. In 1903 (Guangxu 29), Japan and Russia were at war with each other in China's northeastern border area and the Qing court were the meat on the chopping block, at the mercy of the two

butchers, increasing the bitter hatred of the people and the calls for a 'revolution to expel the Manchus'.

Half a century of the Manchu court suffering humiliation and loss of sovereignty and hatred of the corruption of the domestic autocracy and dictatorship eventually brought about an earthquake at the end of the Qing. Members of the Revolutionary Party publicly praised 'the two sages Washington and Napoleon': Washington who had led America through the War of Independence to a Republic; and Napoleon who rose to prominence during the French Revolution and altered the fate of the peoples of Europe. These were genuine model heroes who aroused the masses and rapidly won their support. Was this by chance?

14 December 2008, at night.

PART 6

Rapidly Changing Times

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ESSAY 51

The Disintegration of Power in the Late Qing (1)

Previous historians have in general ignored a phenomenon in the shortlived Xianfeng reign period: the appearance of early signs of the disintegration of power of the Manchu Qing rulers. This emerged over eleven years and was most apparent in military and foreign affairs.

Since the Manchus entered the passes there had been constant internal conflict; even in the era of Huang Taiji [Abahai r. 1626–1643], the Manchus had already changed from the Ming dynasty strategy of 'using barbarians to control barbarians' into one of 'using the Han to control the Han', using the vanquished generals and troops of the Ming dynasty as 'pioneers for the emperor'. However after the downfall of successive Southern Ming regimes, the Qing court was faced with new recalcitrant Han warlords unwilling to subordinate themselves to the new regime, and the Qing were obliged to continue military measures to pacify the regimes of the Three Feudatories and Zheng Chengong [Koxinga] on Taiwan. Subsequently they had to resort to arms against rebellions by various border peoples. This series of major and minor internal conflicts, apart from the expedition to Taiwan, were all dominated by troops of the Eight Banners, with the Han Army of the Green Standard as auxiliaries, that is to say that the Manchu elite always controlled the military power.

However at the end of the Qianlong reign and the beginning of Jiaqing, the Qing court was at a loss to know how to deal with the White Lotus Rebellion and the incapacity of the Eight Banners and the Army of the Green Standard were exposed. At the outbreak of the Opium War, in the middle of the Daoguang reign period, the Qing court still relied on Manchu imperial clan members and veteran generals of the Green Standard to deal with the northern incursion of the British forces, but they were invariably routed, often without even fighting. Mao Haijian's celebrated *Collapse of the Celestial Empire—further research on the Opium War* (Sanlian Books 1995,) demonstrates that this topic really has profound implications.

When the Xianfeng emperor first ascended the throne he had to deal with the Taiping Rebellion and then, within a few years, the burning and looting by the Anglo-French United Army [in the Second Opium War or Arrow War]. The Manchu court, with this wealthy and foppish emperor at its core, was obliged to turn to the 'Han officials', although in their bones they had no confidence that Zeng Guofan and other southern gentry would 'protect families' *baojia* and 'defend the realm' *weiguo*. Therefore when the Taipings established their

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capital in Tianjing [Nanjing] and despatched auxiliary forces on a northern expedition and the Anglo-French forces repeatedly threatened Beijing and Tianjin, the Xianfeng emperor still relied on the military elite of the Eight Banners to rescue the country from this crisis, placing his hopes particularly in the Mongol banner forces led by Prince Senggerinchin.

The Manchu Eight Banners had the hereditary Manchu and Mongol military aristocracy at their core. The lack of ability and corruption of the Manchu bannerman under the Xianfeng emperor's relatives, Qishan and Qijing, during the Opium War demonstrated that they had rotted to the core. The Mongol banners were also changing and from October 1853 (Xianfeng 3) the emperor strictly forbade Mongols from being contaminated by the bad habits of the Han Chinese, taking Chinese names, using the Chinese script (for which see Huang Hongshou *Qingshi jishi benmo* (*Complete Records of Qing history*), *juan* 45, Taipei: Sanmin Press, 1959).

Sengerinchin's Mongol banner troops appears to be an exception and maintained the Mongol troops' tradition of speed and ferocity. In May 1859 (Xianfeng 9), the British fleet once again attacked the Dagu [Taku] Forts and were caught unawares by Senggerinchin's forces, losing several vessels and hundreds of personnel. When the Xianfeng emperor heard news of the victory he was even more convinced that Prince Senggerinchin was the final hope in the defence of the imperial capital but was afraid that something might go wrong. The following month, when British vessels counter-attacked and sailed directly towards the Dagu forts he sent special orders, written in his own hand, to Sengerinchin.

These orders reminded Senggerinchin that, in spite of the crisis at the Dagu forts, it was the capital that was at the heart of the empire and not the coast; he instructed the prince to protect at all costs Tianjin and Tongzhou [on the land route to Beijing] (See *Qingshi gao*, Xianfeng 10 annals).

The emperor was indeed benevolent, even advising Senggerinchin on no account to risk sacrificing his life by reporting back to the monarch, completely unlike Yongzheng, Emperor Gaozu, the Qianlong Emperor Zengzu and others who, when frontline troops were defeated, had generals executed on the battlefield. But the emperor was also sagacious, advising Senggerinchin not to lose sight of the bigger picture if a battle were lost. It must be recognised that the capital was at the heart of the empire and, in the final analysis, only if Beijing were successfully defended would there have been genuine loyalty to the sovereign and defence of the realm. The tone of this handwritten instruction can be pondered upon: one hundred years after similar orders from the Yongzheng emperor to Nian Gengyao how should this kind of personal letter

from the emperor to a senior official, as cordial as if it were to a family member, be perceived?

It is a great pity, according to the official history of the Qing dynasty, that although Sengerinchin's loyalty and courage can be compared with that of Lord Guan (Grandfather Guan as he is referred to in Manchu and as described in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) who is worshipped by shamanist Manchus, his luck ran out at this time. He lost the Dagu forts and Tianjin and definitely did not 'carelessly lose Jingzhou' [a reference to one of the nine provinces of China before the sixth century, covering roughly present-day Hubei and Hunan]. Another person in whom the Xianfeng emperor had confidence, the Manchu general Shengbao, did not have any more success and in a battle at Baliqiao [Eight Li Bridge] on the outskirts of Beijing lost to a weak and ineffectual French formation within the joint British and French forces; as a result of this the French commander was ennobled by Napoleon III as the Count of Eight Li Bridge, so it can be said that 'there are no heroes in the world just fellows who have made a name for themselves'. Needless to say there is no other interpretation but that the Xianfeng emperor, having lost the protective screen of the final remnants of the Manchu and Mongol Eight Banners under Sengerinchin and Shengbao, abandoned the Yuanmingyuan Old Summer Palace to be devastated by the British and French forces.

The Xianfeng emperor led his wives, concubines and personal servants and slinked away to Rehe (Jehol), leaving a dilapidated capital and country. At that time the Taiping Rebellion was flaring up and threatening to become a national civil war. Units of the Hunan Army that had been formed by Zeng Guofan, Hu Linyi and Zuo Zongtang, were aware of the occupation of the imperial capital by British and French forces and requested that the Qing court allow them to come to the rescue, but in the end these were hollow words as the British and French burned the Yuanmingyuan and, after imposing the Treaty of Beijing, withdrew from the capital. The Xianfeng emperor accepted this new 'national humiliation' and declined to return to Beijing, finally becoming ill and dying in Chengde.

These were similar events, seemingly odd but not odd in reality. How could the playboy emperor amuse himself with his concubines without the Yuanmingyuan Summer Palace? Without the authority of the 'Son of Heaven', how could the emperor of the Great Qing deal with the 'foreign barbarians' and preserve the proprieties of the Celestial Empire? Without the comprehensive dictatorial powers of an emperor that had existed for over a hundred years since the Qianlong period, how could the seventh generation Manchu emperor make a formal report on his achievements to generations of his ancestors?

The Xianfeng emperor was weak and often ailing and he did not anticipate that at the age of thirty the 'dragon would mount up and go to war'. Throughout his life he had been obliged to agree with the 'imperial younger brother', Prince Gong [with whom he had been brought up as a child] and the court officials remaining in Beijing to negotiate with the British, French, Russians, Americans and others on what would become known as the unequal treaties, and especially with their insistence on establishing the Zongli Yamen in Beijing. No such institution has previously existed and it took control over powers to deal with foreign affairs that had previously been the prerogative of the emperor personally.

After this, until the 1911 Xinhai Revolution forced the abdication of the Qing emperor, some fifty years later, whether or not powers over foreign affairs lay solely with the sovereign or could be usurped and directly controlled [by officials] became one of the great issued of late Qing politics.

6 June 2008, at night.

ESSAY 52

The Disintegration of Power in the Late Qing (II)

The fragmentation of power during the Xianfeng reign period that has already been mentioned appeared suddenly in military affairs and foreign relations. On 20 January 1861 (Xianfeng 12) the emperor who had fled to Rehe issued an edict authorising the establishment of the Zongli Yamen in Beijing, and appointed Prince Gong, Yixin and two other senior Manchu officials to manage it: this was the first indication of the foreign relations of the empire being removed from the direct control of the emperor.

In fact eight years previously, on 8 January 1853 (Xianfeng 21), the young emperor, still carefree and at his leisure in the Yuanmingyuan Old Summer Palace, had issued another edict with epoch-making significance for domestic affairs. This edict approved the appointment of Zeng Guofan, who was registered with the Board of Rites as being in mourning for a parent, to assist in running the Hunan village militia and to search for local bandits among other tasks.

The Qing followed the Ming system, demanding that Han officials were 'fillial' towards their parents. Zeng's father and mother had both died and he had resigned his official post and returned to his home county, abstained from eating meat, was living on his own and had not cut his hair or shaved his beard for twenty five months of the 'mourning' period. Zeng Guofan of Xiang county in Hunan, who had achieved the *jinshi* degree in the middle of the Daoguang reign, entered the Hanlin Academy, and had served as the Chinese Junior Vice President of the Board of Rites unexpectedly found himself, in his forties after the death of his mother, resigned from his official post and returned to his home town to preserve filiality. Perhaps heaven intervened to assist him as the Taiping armies led by Hong Xiuquan and Yang Xiuqing had crossed the Wuling Mountains and were heading northwards towards Hunan and Hubei. The Eight Banners of the Manchus and the Chinese Army of the Green Standard advanced to suppress the rebellion but lost every battle. The Qing court had no option but to take heed of the advice of Wenqing, Sushun and others to 'rely on the Han Chinese officials', break with precedent and appoint a mere commoner, Zeng Guofan, to run the militia.

The Xianfeng emperor and his highest ranking officials did not at all expect such an expedient plan and rewrote two hundred years of the history of power since the foundation of the dynasty in which it was not permitted for a Han Chinese who was not a bannerman to wield military power; there was a special concern to guard against southern commoners 'playing soldiers in the pond'.

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The story goes that when Zeng Guofan received the instructions to take over the militia he trembled and sought advice from Sushun's private secretary and his fellow Hunanese, Guo Songdao. It is also said that afterwards Zeng's own private secretary Wang Kaiyun and others repeatedly tried to persuade Zeng Guofan privately to emulate the precedents of Liu Bang and Liu Xiu and proclaim himself emperor.

However it cannot be gainsaid that Zeng Guofan, Hu Linyi, Zuo Zongtang and other Hunan army generals who shared his aspirations, and generals of the Huai army established by Li Hongzhang who was an acquaintance of the Zeng family, rewrote the history of late Qing military power.

Superficially, from 1852 (Xianfeng 2) when the Qing court conferred on Zeng Guofan the official authority to call together the militias and confront the Taiping armies the ancient rules, that had lasted two hundred years since the foundation of the Manchu Qing state in which non-banner registered Han Chinese were not permitted to wield military power independently, had been shattered. Even if the Xianfeng emperor was advised by the high Han official Qin Juncao he still 'mended the fold even after the sheep had escaped' and appointed influential Manchus including Guanwen to supervise the armies of Zeng and Hu. But Zeng, Hu and the others had always realised how to deal with the Manchu elite who were corrupt by nature, and knew that only through using 'private channels', the sort of military supervision that they gave would not be difficult to handle. Therefore Zeng, Hu, Zou and even Li Hongzhang and other southern military heads, in the process of suppressing the Taiping and Nian rebellions, became strong and insubordinate. Consequently in the late Qing, fifty years after this, it can be said that the southern political class had realistically seized control though the military heads of the Hunan and Huai armies.

Our modern historians have for sixty years adhered to an unchanging topic, that possession of an army conveys power, 'political power arising from the barrel of a gun'. That concept can be seen early on in the writings of Zeng Guofan. No wonder Chiang Kai-shek organised the Lushan military training regiment to 'clean out the communists', according to the words and deeds of Zeng Wenzheng (as Zeng Guofan was styled posthumously) in his annihilation of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Turning to Mao Zedong in power, when he was young he worshipped his fellow-provincial, the old sage Zeng Guofan. Later when he arrived in Yan'an, to oppose Chiang Kai-shek, according to Fan Wenlan's history, he saw Zeng Guofan as a Han traitor and executioner. However by the early days of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong discovered that in former days Chiang Kai-shek had a similar advantageous position and the criticism of Zeng cooled down. Mao's had launched the 'criticism of Confucianism and Legalism' which gave no thought to Zeng Guofan

and even Jiang Qing does not seem to have been clear as to whether Zeng was a Confucian or a legalist. One point can be confirmed: all later people have reflected on the historical position of Zeng and his allies.

Turning again to the civil wars of the Xianfeng reign, when I first read the history of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom fifty years ago I really felt that I did not understand Hong Xiuquan and Yang Xiuqing moving into the stone city, Nanjing, reviving the old system with new terminology. Now, rereading modern history, I am less confident that the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom was a 'revolution', but feel even more doubtful about that real reason for the Xianfeng emperor agreeing with Wenqing and others to set up the Hunan and Huai armies.

The Manchu Qing Xianfeng emperor agreed to Wenqing's proposal and ordered Zeng Guofan who was registered as a board Vice President to organise a militia, even though this broke with the two hundred year old ancestral system of the Manchus. The key to 'using the Manchus to control the Han' was the prohibition on non banner Han officials contaminating the military leadership.

The Xianfeng emperor was at death's door and willing to try anything: he reinstated Lin Zexu in an official position so that he could suppress the armies of the Taiping; following Lin's death the Eight Banners and the Army of the Green Standard lost battle after battle with the Taiping. It was impossible not to move even further from the ancestral system, 'using Han to control Han', and the Qing were obliged to concede military leadership to a Han, and what is more one of the so called 'ignoramuses' of the southern gentry. Xianfeng did not expect that the class of Zeng, Hu and Zuo, when they first took control of the military leadership would turn into indomitable rebels; neither did he expect that the Mongol banner troops in which he placed such hope would be useless in the face of the Taiping northern expedition and would lose all their battles with the British and French troops invading from the north.

As has been noted previously, in 1860 (Xianfeng 10) those senior officials who had remained in Beijing after the flight of the court had established the Zongli Yamen, which had stripped away the authority in foreign affairs of the little court that had fled to Rehe. In reality, even before this, the emperor had been obliged to agree to the establishment by Zeng Guofan and others of the Hunan Army, an even greater sign that the court had relinquished military leadership. An autocractic regime formed by a border minority people that had conquered the Han and other minorities but in the end surrendered the authority of the emperor in foreign and military affairs had uncertain prospects.

9 June 2008, at night

ESSAY 53

'Establishing a Reservoir', the Selection of a Crown Prince (1)

An imperial system, whether in ancient or modern times, in China or foreign lands, is necessarily involved with the difficult problem of selecting an heir, but in mediaeval China it was especially prominent. The system of multiple wives that originated in the age of the Yellow Emperor or at the latest the collapse of the Zhou dynasty and its replacement by the Shang (Yin) led to the system of succession by the eldest son of the wife, a tradition that even the formidable Han emperor Gaozu was not able to change. The question of whether it should be based on the seniority of the wife or the son, or whether it should take into account ability, seems to have dominated the entire middle ages. However it just seemed like that, and from the Han, Jin, Sui and Tang periods to the Yuan and Ming there were hundreds of large and small ruling houses in China and all experienced conflict over the selection of an heir. This conflict was often accompanied by a reign of terror, and even emperors who historians admire such as the Taizong emperors of both the Tang and the Song dynasty, Khubilai Khan of the Yuan and the Ming Yongle emperor were all involved in breaking the succession of the wife's eldest son in their ascent to the throne.

The early Qing period seems to have been the exception and actually to have operated within the regulations. The origins of the Manchus were in a tribal confederation brought together by Nurhachi for military purposes. Before he died he designated his eldest sons as the 'four senior *beile* (princes)', placing them above all the Manchu tribal leaders, and like the other peoples of the northern frontiers, attaching importance to the younger sons. Of the four princes the youngest, Huang Taiji (Abahai, also known as the fourth *beile*) whose mother was Nurhachi's junior wife, Yehonala, was his favourite and the one who had the greatest military talent and he therefore was made the head of the alliance of the chiefs of the Eight Banners. Huang Taiji, whose posthumous temple name was Taizong, was deeply admired for his wisdom and intelligence in government; he changed the name of the state from Jin to Great Qing and focused on concentrating military power into his own hands. When Huang Taiji died after seventeen years on the throne, his eldest son Daishan took control over the banner alliance, and his ninth son Fulin, who was just six years old, was chosen as the heir-apparent. This was the beginning of the system of father-to-son succession in the Manchu Qing empire.

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Fulin was the first of the Qing emperors after the Manchus had entered the passes and he took the reign name of Shunzhi. As he was young much of the power devolved on his 'ninth uncle' Dorgon, and it is said that Dorgon not only designated himself as 'regent uncle' but in the manner of the ancient rulers of all the northern tribes from the Xiongnu, Xianbei, Jurchen to the Manchus, he took as his concubines the widow of his deceased brother, Shunzhi's mother and the wife of the Mongol Prince Kerchin. By the time that Dorgon died in January 1651 (12th month of Shunzhi 7) at the age of 39 it is possible that he had been thinking of himself as the emperor. Fulin became emperor in his own right in 1651 (the first month of Shunzhi 8) and Dorgon was honoured as Emperor Yi with the temple name of Chengzong. However within two months Dorgon was denounced, 'his property was confiscated and his associates put to death'. Evidently such internal feuds within the elite of the Manchu banners were not particularly strange.

Shunzhi ruled in his own right for just ten years. History bears out the fact that he was more enthusiastic than Dorgon in following the Ming system, taking as his model the first two emperors of the early Ming, and therefore offended against the privileges of the Manchu banner conquerors more than Dorgon. In the early spring of 1661 (Shunzhi 18) Shunzhi contracted smallpox, the most feared disease of the Manchus and Mongols, and was faced with the difficult decision of designating a successor. It is said that he took the advice of the foreign Jesuit missionary Adam Schall von Bell (Tang Ruowang) and agreed to bequeath the throne to the imperial third son, Xuanye, the reason being that this eight year old mixed blood Manchu had already survived smallpox.

This second generation member of the Aisin Gioro family to enter Beijing as emperor ascended to the throne the following year, taking the reign title of Kangxi, and died in 1722 at the age of 69. Before the 'Cultural Revolution', the distinguished modern historian Liu Danian published *On Kangxi*, which compared the emperor with the French Sun King, Louis XIV and in which he took the view that Kangxi's achievements were not inferior to those of contemporary France and and might even have been greater. That year I read this essay of Liu Danian's with great interest as I was privately rereading works of the modern history of Europe and discovered that the two of them were genuinely comparable. Soon after that I was ordered to take part in the criticism of the China section of *General History of the World* produced by the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, and loathed the defence of the invasion of China by Tsarist Russia in that book, but considered that the history of mediaeval China in that book gave little cause for criticism.

Time has passed and I have returned to the hundred year history of the late Qing several times; I discovered that the position of the five reigns from

Jiaqing, Daoguang, Xianfeng and Tongzhi up to Guangxu continued the traditions and no official works of modern history describe it so simply.

Previous historians of the Qing have drawn attention to the reforms in the system for designating an heir carried out by the Yongzheng emperor, Shizong. After the Manchus had come through the passes, did this third generation sovereign murder his father and usurp the throne by altering his father's instructions on the designated heir? This question is still unresolved in academic circles. I am in agreement with Meng Sen's argument in *Investigations on Qing Shizong's Inheritance of the Empire*, in which he considers that the murder and usurpation might be historical fact, the problem being in the comparisons of the Manchu and Chinese texts of Kangxi's testament; to this day there is no reliable conclusion so there is no harm in leaving the question open.

However the Yongzheng emperor altered the Qing tradition of designating an heir that had followed the practice of the Ming dynasty, and directly managed it himself. Originally, before the Manchus entered the passes, the system was that the congregation of the Eight Banners chose the heir, although Huang Taiji acquired great military power and changed the system by which the son inherited after the death of the father. However he changed it from a system of selecting the heir based on a Han custom. By the time Shunzhi transmitted the succession to his third son Kangxi, this was evident.

After 61 years on the throne the Kangxi emperor had fathered 35 sons. About half of these imperial sons, excluding those who died in infancy, formed cliques to struggle for the succession. Kangxi's eldest son, Yinreng, had been born to a concubine and at the age of just two *sui* had been designated as crown prince and heir by Kangxi. His mother who was named Empress Yeshili died in childbirth and the boy was regarded with particular affection by the emperor. He was heir apparent for 25 years and was inevitably impatient to sit on the dragon throne, so when he heard that his father was ill he was visibly delighted. Unknown to him his father the emperor had secret informers spread throughout the court and outside and he lost his status as son and heir, was reinstated but finally repudiated and was imprisoned within the palace until his death in January 1724 (Yongzheng 2).

After Yinreng was rejected for the second time, Kangxi did not designate a crown prince, the effect of this being to inflame further the conflict between the imperial sons over the succession. The aged emperor was obliged to select his fourth son, who did not appear to be in the direct line of succession, to undertake ceremonial duties on his behalf, not realising that he had taken on another dark horse. This fourth son, whose personal name was Yinzhen, after having attended alone his father on his sickbed, arranged for Longkodo, the officer commanding the Beijing gendarmerie, to put the capital under strict

military control, then announced that his father had passed away but had passed the throne to Yinzhen just before he died.

The legality of the succession of the Yongzheng emperor has been constantly doubted. One point that has been overlooked by historians is that soon after Yongzheng ascended to the throne, he announced that before his death the emperor had clearly designated him crown prince, which could not have been to his advantage at all. Therefore he decided to designate an heir in secret, prepared a confidential edict which was placed in a secret container that, in the presence of court nobles and high official, was deposited in the main hall of the Qianqing Palace [in the Forbidden City] behind a board inscribed 'upright and glorious'.

In this manner the Yongzheng emperor appeared to have resolved the contradictions of the system of succession to the throne that had existed since the Qin and Han dynasties; he had designated an heir and had also avoided wrangling over the position. If the sons and grandsons hoped that 'it would be their turn to be emperor' and were anxious about the prospects, wrongdoing in words and actions could not be avoided. Some behaved in a superior manner and others were overcautious.

The plan was not a bad one and benefited the stability of the autocratic regime. However the conflict between heirs across the dynasties was actually the externalisation of internal conflicts in the monarchical system. The Yongzheng emperor pushed the Manchu Qing monarchical system to the point of absolute individual autocracy, sufficient to allow the imperial sons to regard themselves as celestial descendents, an elite standing at the back, hotly pursuing this autocracy, so open quarrels became secret conflict. The form of 'choosing an heir' may have changed but it really remained the same.

ESSAY 54

'Establishing a Reservoir', the Selection of a Crown Prince (II)

The secret designation of an heir was undoubtedly a transformation in the mediaeval Chinese mechanism for handing down the monarchy. But, as has been mentioned previously, what was transformed was merely the outward appearance; it did not touch the internal mechanism for preserving the privileges of the Manchu bloodline.

For example in August 1723, the strict and impartial 'constitutional emperor' was first designated as the heir to the throne, but this appeared to be for show and at first glance there was little latitude in the choice because, although he had ten sons, the majority had died young and only two were over ten years of age. It had to be either the emperor's fourth son, Hongli, or the fifth, Hongzhou. Firstly, looking at the mothers of thee two imperial sons, one [the mother of Hongli] was a Manchu of the Niohuru clan, the other was considered to be of the Aisin Gioro clan but his mother came from the Geng family, which had a Han Chinese background. Secondly, taking into consideration the ages and the status of the mother, Hongli was the preferred candidate; moreover it is said that when he was very young this fourth son had been admired by [his grandfather] Kangxi for his military prowess. And thirdly? The Yongzheng emperor had gone through the formalities of concealing secret instructions in the box [behind the inscribed board in the Forbidden City] and had cautioned the court nobility and senior officials to take precautions as 'perhaps it would be hidden for decades before its contents would be knows'. After he came to the throne there was sycophancy to the Buddha and appeals to the immortals, burning of incense and taking of medicine, all to seek his 'long life without limits', and the secret edict on the succession was kept on his person. Obviously a secret edict could not be seen as irreversible, and twelve years later when he died the make believe of the secret designation of an heir became a reality.

Moving on to the appearance on the stage of Hongli, the 'pure emperor' who took the reign name of Qianlong when he came to the throne; he had a long life, had many concubines and 17 sons and wished to break the record of 'the continued acknowledgment of succession by principal wife in previous reigns since the Yuan dynasty'. Soon after acceding to the throne he 'personally wrote a secret decree' naming Yonglian, his second son by his first wife, the Empress Xiaoxian of the Fuca clan, but this child died at the age of 9 *sui*.

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He then named the next son, Yongcong, as his heir, but this seventh imperial son had an even shorter life, succumbing to smallpox at the age of only 2 *sui*. This caused the Qianlong emperor great disappointment, his Fuca wife died not long afterwards and her successor from the Nara clan was unable to accept the emperor's dissipation and committed suicide. The emperor was furious and did not designate another successor, so the two sons born to his Nara wife had no hope of being acknowledged as successors.

In 1795 (Qianlong 60) there was a solar eclipse on the first day of the 4th lunar (*yimao*) month, and this was followed by an eclipse of the moon on the fifteenth of the first month. The superstitious 85 year old emperor who trusted sorcery and shamans was scared out of his wits, and thought that heaven was admonishing him, condemning him for betraying the vows that he had made when he ascended the throne in a previous *yimao* period. As if he had received guidance from heaven, he decided that his period on the throne should not be permitted to exceed that of the Kangxi emperor's 61 years. After secret discussions with Heshen he hastily selected his fifteenth son Yongyan [subsequently the Jiaqing emperor] as his crown prince. Because his mother was from a Han Chinese banner family, the Wei, and had been dead for twenty years, this was not the same as with previous Manchu emperors; possibly his mother's family were impeded by the illustrious Manchu and Mongol military elite, or it might have been a selection of the appropriate person by the old emperor and his court favourite, using the opportunity to trick the ghosts and the gods.

Obviously the old emperor was anxious for a 'warding-off wedding' which would save even the necessity for a secret ceremony to designate an heir, but he still could not forget the edict that he had promulgated in 1747 (Qianlong 12), the one known as 'I wish to act in ways that my predecessors have not, seeking the good fortune that my predecessors have not obtained', and as has already been mentioned the 'continued acknowledgment of succession by the principal wife in previous reigns since the Yuan dynasty'. The best way of dealing with this problem seemed to be at the same time to restore or reinstate the open decree that the emperor had made on the designation of an heir and seek to enoble his Wei family mother as Empress Dowager Xiaoyi. Whether or not this was in contradiction to Qianlong's 1778 (Qianlong 43) open edict on 'revising the empress's register' is a matter of opinion.

Therefore in order to conceal any traces of his 'usurping the throne', the Yongzheng emperor put an end to the use of the word 'usurpation' and painstakingly planned secret designations of the heir, for transmission to one generation only, being obliged to have blind faith in his son, the emperor Qianlong's, 'complete awe of the celestial transformations', which existed in name only.

That year the old emperor created a crown prince in haste and announced that in the first lunar month of the following year he would abdicate, hurriedly announcing that he would retire with the title of *Taishanghuang* ('Emperor Emeritus'). Fearing that officials and the populace might misinterpret his real intentions, he immediately promulgated another edict for internal and external consumption, making it clear that after having become the *Taishanghuang*, 'important matters will still be determined by me'.

One of these 'important matters' that he was to decide on was the designation of his son's wife as empress; he also concerned himself with questions of the status of his grandson, the future Daoguang emperor, and other royal descendants. In 1799 (Jiaqing 4) the emperor hounded Heshen to death and personally took the reigns of government but still dare not alter the rules of succession that the Qianlong emperor as *Taishanghuang* had laid down. Because the second son of the emperor had defended the palace during the Lin Qing coup (Eight Trigrams rebellion of 1813), he was awarded the title of Prince Zhi, which was as good a acknowledging him as the designated heir to the throne.

But the Jiaqing emperor insisted on adhering rigidly to the ancestral system up to the time that he took control of his troops at the Rehe subsidiary palace, and issued an edict ordering the Prince Zhi to succeed him. The new Daoguang emperor was extremely hot-headed and launched an attack on the court officials of the previous reign, dealing severely with those he felt had committed offences, dismissed key officials and brought new blood into the Grand Council.

The Daoguang emperor's temple name was Xuanzong and he was the sixth Manchu emperor to rule China since the invasion of 1644. He was on the throne for 30 years (from September 1820 to February 1850) including the period of the Opium War, after which he was forced to ratify the first unequal treaty, the Treaty of Nanjing, which ceded Hong Kong to the British and opened five treaty ports to trade with the West and paid reparations to the British military invaders—a humiliating surrender of the nation's sovereignty. Previous historians have taken the year 1840 (Daoguang 20) as the end-point of China's ancient history, overlooking the fact that after that year the Daoguang emperor still rigorously enforced an autocratic system.

The Daoguang emperor died ten years after China's defeat in the Opium War and, as before, the convention of the secret designation of an heir was observed although the older ancestral system existed in name only. According to the *Draft History of the Qing*, after he had been on the throne for 13 years, his fourth wife Guifei had had nine sons, of whom three had died young. Of those remaining who competed for the succession, the most important was the fourth son, the future Xianfeng emperor, and the sixth son Yixin (Prince Gong).

Based on the matrilineal line, both had been born to an empress. Based on education and upbringing, Yixin had knowledge of foreign and current affairs and his knowledge and intellect far outstripped that of the fourth brother. In terms of personal quality, the fourth son was tainted by a reputation for luxury and pleasure-seeking, much more so than the sixth brother. Of course in the process of selecting an heir at the end of Daoguang's life, the one who fell by the wayside was Yixin. Unofficial records of the later Qing period reveal that the conflict between them was very similar to the one between the cousins Bao and Dai in the novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The Daoguang emperor, who had been badly affected by the Opium War, had a psychology much like the matriarch of the Jia family, enjoying listening to rumours and abominating any strong criticism. The fourth son was more receptive to learning from his tutors and too kind hearted to take to hunting. He was however loyal and filial, the image of Xue Baochai in the novel. The sixth son was more like Lin Daiyu, whose words and actions were rather impetuous and saw hunting as a sport, saying that she had never covered up her ideals in the face of hypocrites. The choice of emperor fell on Xianfeng; just as in the novel, Baochai was victorious over Daiyu.

In February 1850, the Daoguang emperor passed away and Xianfeng succeeded him. This individual selected fine women, including a Manchu wife from the Yehonala family. Although she did not even speak Manchu she did produce the Xianfeng emperor's only son and was therefore raised to the position of empress. History knows her as the Empress Dowager, Cixi, and she was the autocratic ruler of China for almost 47 years during the late Qing period, finally bringing about the collapse of the Qing empire, but more of that later.

21 May 2008, at night.

ESSAY 55

'Summons to Interview' under the Daoguang and Xianfeng Emperors (1)

According to the personnel system regularised in the Yongzheng and Qianlong reign periods, all local higher-ranking officials, including provincial governors-general and governors, regional inspectors and financial commissioners, provincial judges, intendants of grain and salt controllers should as a rule request instructions from the emperor, receiving the emperor's agreement for an interview and a conversation alone with the emperor, the 'summons to interview' at the beginning of their appointments or before they were transferred.

In the middle period of the Qing dynasty, that is after the Jiaqing emperor took power in his own right in 1799, the 'summons to interview' had become routine. Sometimes it would involve different types of official being promoted or two officials from different provinces being transferred at the same level, and there was an imperial edict that notice could be given that those officials did not have to travel to the capital to seek request instructions. But as far as the rare 'personal interview with the emperor' was concerned it was possible for those in charge of a circuit, before promotion or transfer, to obtain the imperial 'summons to interview'. Not only was this a great honour for the individual and the extended family, it was also an exceptional opportunity to make an impression on the 'contemporary sage', the sovereign on the throne, for future transfer and promotion prospects. Therefore if that type of official was fortunate enough to obtain a 'summons to interview', it was something they could dine out on to make sure their contemporaries knew about it, and they frequently wrote about it in either private of public accounts.

There was a man from Yizheng in Jiangsu, one Zhang Jixin, who could be described as typical. He was from an orthodox background, obtained the degree of *jinshi* in 1829 (Daoguang 9) and in 1836 (Daoguang 16) was transferred from his position as a Hanlin Academy Compiler to be a Prefect. In 1839 (Daoguang 19), at the age of 40, he began a series of acting appointments in different prefectures or circuits. In the Daoguang, Xianfeng and Tongzhi reign periods, he held office as either deputy or actual circuit intendant, provincial judge, provincial treasurer in Shanxi, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Gansu, Henan, Zhili, Fujian and Jiangxi, also serving in the early years of the Tongzhi reign as acting governor of Shaanxi. In 1865 (Tongzhi 4), at the age of 66, he was removed as

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Shaanxi provincial judge and retired on grounds of ill-health, having accumulated 26 years of service in supervising circuits in his career. In later years he lived in Beijing, and with the diary that he kept throughout his whole life he compiled a personal chronology; he left behind parts of the incomplete diary and correspondence with friends and colleagues. His hand-written copies and drafts have been edited and annotated in *Daoguang Huanhai jianwen lu* (*Informed Records of Daoguang Period Officialdom*, Zhonghua Press, 1981) and attracted considerable interest from historians on publication.

A personal chronology is an annal of the history of an individual; whether it is compiled by that person or someone else the subjective intention is often the compiler's wish to leave a mark on history. Zhang Jixin was no exception. He considered himself to be a loyal official of the Great Qing and made himself out to be principled and unconcerned about his own poverty, praising himself for scrupulously discharging the duties of his posts, describing himself as an honest official who abided by the rules, full of remorse for having ideals that he could not achieve, grieving that he had never been appointed as a high provincial official—the entire chronology is permeated with these thoughts. However, considering the overall chronology, what is most striking is that he comes across as a mediocre person. For a long time he held posts of circuit supervisor and understood thoroughly the longstanding abuses in military finance and taxation but, because he went along with the usual practices, also wallowed in the mire, including the giving and taking of bribes. He also frequently commended himself for 'reading the books of the sages, not betraying his aspirations, using the methods of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, and turning the other cheek' (op. cit. pp. 225, 316). But as a mediocre character his gaze never shifted from his personal position and wealth in his official career. The chronological diary sets out his personal reputation and authority at the time but the book as a whole can be read as a 'record of official practice' during the Daoguang and Xianfeng periods.

Because Zhang Jixin held so many appointments in his 30 year career, he was 'summoned to interview' in the capital on a number of occasions, and according to *Shiqing zhaizhuren nianpu* compiled by his nephew, Zhan Sixian in 1880 (Guangxu 6), two years after Zhang's death, he was accorded the honour of conversations with the emperor on eight occasions. In the modern text of *Daoguang Huanhai jianwen lu* (*Informed Records of Daoguang Period Officialdom*), it is reliably recorded that he was summoned six times, the sources for these being his diary. It is clear that Zhang Jixin was afraid to omit any of these dialogues, even details such as the Daoguang emperor's 'shaking his hand and sighing, and the Xianfeng emperor's 'nasal groan' are recollected

accurately. Such a detailed account, apart from exposing Zhang Jixin's slave mentality, allows insight into the bias and ignorance of the father and son emperors, Daoguang and Xianfeng towards local politics.

For example, during the Daoguang reign Zhang Jixin received three 'summonses for interview. On the first occasion in 1835 (Daoguang 15) Zhang Jixin was already a Hanlin Academy compiler appointed by the emperor. Therefore the emperor repeatedly instructed him to read 'useful things' and 'the books of statesmen' as this would be beneficial to the state. Needless to say the emperor regarded himself as the personification of the state. The second occasion on which he was summoned was ten years later, when Zhang had accumulated eight years of experience in office as prefect and acting circuit intendant in Shanxi, and this time Zhang was awarded the post of grain intendant, a lucrative position that was also known as 'management of the temple of the God of Wealth'. On going to the audience with the emperor before taking up his appointment, he was specifically instructed to exercise 'personal integrity', particularly in his later years, indicating that the Daoguang emperor already knew that officials appointed to these positions were invariably corrupt. Zhang Jixin kowtowed and indicated that he would 'solemnly respect the imperial instructions' but no sooner had he turned round than he 'followed the universal rule of social engagements' in Beijng, and without restraint provided loans and took bribes, 'using a total of 17,000 taels of silver as parting presents', and, as everyone known, a 'parting present' was the 'red envelope' containing money distributed to powerful court officials.

This Shaanxi God of Wealth was fortunate; during his period in office he made a favourable impression on two governors of the governor-generalship of Shaanxi and Gansu, Deng Tingzhen and Lin Zexu and repeatedly acted as provincial judge and received confidential reports from Lin Zexu. In June 1847 (Daoguang 27) he was invited to fill a vacancy for a provincial judge in Sichuan and set of for his third 'summons for interview; in Beijing. In August of the same year he went to the Yuanmingyuan Old Summer Palace three times for general audiences with the Daoguang emperor. The emperor announced in a 'special edict' those who were to be assigned provincial posts and promoted, later instructing him that, 'there are a great many laws in Sichuan, the most in the interior', and, 'when you go there you should take great care and not pay attention to the talk of those base staff behind the scenes who preserve their lives but do not rescue the dying', meaning that he should not be soft on those committing crimes. Then he was sent to Sichuan for another session of provincial public order administration as political and legal supremo. Needless to say Zhang Jixin 'solemnly respected the imperial instructions' and afterwards

rushed around the families of influential officials dispensing 'over fifteen thousand taels of silver'.

However, the conversation with Zhang Jixin at the Daoguang emperor's third 'summons to interview is rather interesting. In 1847 (Daoguang 27) it was five years since the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing between Britain and the Qing government, and the crisis on the northern and southern borders was being deepened by British and Tsarist Russian aggression and could break out at any moment. The Manchu Qing emperor sensed that the 'great house' of the empire was tottering and in the process of disintegrating, but he could not have known of the danger to his autocratic rule was internal rather than external, especially among the people of the southern provinces, the impact of which was clear.

24 June 2008, in the evening.

ESSAY 56

‘Summons to Interview’ under the Daoguang and Xianfeng Emperors (II)

The previous essay has referred to the Qing dynasty practice of ‘summoning to interview’ local governors and governors general for a face to face discussion with the emperor on their appointment or transfer. This was the Manchu ‘ancestral system’, and the Kangxi emperor, Shengzu, after he began to rule in his own right in 1669, often used this system to ‘scrutinise his officials’. His successor, the Yongzheng emperor, who was on the throne for only 13 years (November 1722 to August 1735) completed the system of autocratic rule by the emperor, and, as the *Qingshi gao* puts it, ‘melancholy lesser officials [who are] exhausted and weakened’. Apart from creating the Grand Council and concentrating the power of appointment and dismissal of officials in the hands of the sovereign, this autocrat who was well-known for his harshness, on the one hand strengthened the system of secret ‘folded’ communications, to prevent Manchu and Han officials inside and outside the palace from forming factions and contending for power; on the other hand he established the system of ‘nourishing honesty’ which legalised the corruption of local officials at various levels; it could be called ‘using corruption to control corruption’. His son, the Qianlong emperor, constantly emphasised the fact that whether they were banner bondsmen or Han officials, all must observe ‘loyalty to the sovereign and closeness to superiors’ as the only virtue, and this was also an important yardstick for checking his officials. Later writers on the history of the Qing dynasty frequently talked of the ‘prosperous age of Kangxi and Qianlong’, as if the Yongzheng ‘way of government’ was not really worth speaking of. Is that really respecting history?

It appears that in fact the Daoguang emperor had the intention of emulating his great grandfather ‘Shizong, Emperor Xian’ [that is Yongzheng]. When his time on the throne came to an end there is no doubt that, faced with internal and external crises in the empire that worsened by the day and in contrast to his father, Jiaqing, who ‘had courage and insight’, he was devoted to maintaining the achievements of his predecessors at a time when this was not attainable. It is said that he personally smoked opium (see Su Zhiliang *History of Narcotics in China*, Shanghai Peoples Press, 1997, p. 100), so how could he agree with Lin Zexu’s suppression of the drug. Also after the defeat by British forces he may have turned into an advocate of appeasement but that is another

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question. What is not in doubt is that in his edict agreeing to peace negotiations he said 'For me the fate of the people is the most important', and afterwards, in his edict agreeing to the Treaty of Nanjing, he also said, 'It is because I am connected to hundreds of millions' (*Qingshi gao*, 'Basic Annals of Xuanzong', 3), which is obviously hypocritical. Another example is that after he had been on the throne for thirty years, 'popular revolt against official oppression' within China and on the frontiers was always blamed on bandits who had to be ruthlessly suppressed.

The *Daoguang Huanhai jianwen lu* (*Informed Records of Daoguang Period Officialdom*) that has already been mentioned records that in December 1848, two months before his death, the Daoguang emperor 'summoned for interview' Zhang Jixin who had been Sichuan Provincial Judge and was being transferred to Guizhou as the Provincial Administration Commissioner. In their conversation the emperor asked Zhang about recent banditry in Sichuan, to which Zhang replied that since the appointment of Qishan, many had been rounded up and dealt with according to the law and indicated that the population of Sichuan had been lawless for centuries which made it difficult for local officials to carry out their duties. The emperor pointed out that there were similar difficulties in other provinces but agreed that Qishan had done a good job in Sichuan.

It is not necessary to point out specially that Qishan, a Manchu hereditary Marquess of the Plain Yellow Banner, had nine years previously framed Lin Zexu and deceived his sovereign. Moreover in his previous position as Imperial Commissioner he had sued for peace with the British invaders and was responsible for the secession of Hong Kong and other humiliating conditions. He had then been sentenced to death with the confiscation of all of his property by the Qing court for his failure and duplicity, but was granted a pardon by the Daoguang emperor and was later restored to office and appointed Governor-General of Sichuan. Because he had suppressed the secret societies and bandits and butchered 'minority tribes', he was promoted to Assistant Grand Secretary. The appreciation of Qishan by the Sichuan judge Zhang Jixin at this imperial 'summons for interview' (and at this time Qishan had been transferred to the post of Governor-General of Shaanxi and Gansu and Zhang Jixin later became the Provincial Treasurer of Gansu), praising him highly in the presence of the sovereign as of 'the highest intelligence', reminds us that he was blamed for wronging his country, and at this time he had also been impeached for the deaths of border peoples in Sichuan, Gansu and other provinces, all of which had been done in the name of the sovereign. The Daoguang emperor took the opportunity of the 'summons to interview' to announce the return of Qishan. Apart from admonishing Qishan and Zhang to exert themselves, he said

blatantly, ‘You have received the favour of the state and high officials who are treated in this way should not speak ill of the state’. He was demanding that senior provincial officials should emulate Qishan and that the more senior the official the more ‘intelligent’ they should be and the more they should be able to take all mistakes of the emperor on to themselves. It is clear that this Qing imperial ‘summons to interview’ was not restricted to ‘scrutinising officials’, but was also used to reinforce the idea of ‘loyalty to the sovereign and closeness to superiors’ in the minds of high-ranking local officials.

After the transition from the Daoguang to the Xianfeng reign, Qishan fell and rose once again in the internal disputes among the Manchu elite. Zhang Jixin also sank and floated with him and, after the death of Qishan, was appointed to other important judicial and financial positions during the civil war between the Qing and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom; during the Xianfeng period he was ‘summoned for interview’ by the emperor on four occasions. At the beginning of the Tongzhi period he was also favoured with two ‘summonses to interview’ with the empress. He also left detailed records of another three ‘summonses’ in Xianfeng 6 and 9, and these are interesting primary materials for our understanding of the political and personal attitudes of this foppish emperor but unfortunately they have hardly been used by Chinese or foreign modern historians.

1 July 2007, at night.

ESSAY 57

Eleven Years of the Xianfeng Reign

The Qing Xianfeng emperor was fortunate in obtaining the throne, but unfortunate once on the throne, reigned for a period of nearly 12 years, pressurised by both internal disorder and foreign aggression and with hardly a day of peace. Of course a historian looking back and relating the rule of this Manchu emperor who was the 7th generation to rule China after entering through the passes in 1644 and who died young is blessed with the wisdom of hindsight. Whether this 'Glorious emperor' as he was posthumously named, really understood his own plight is debatable.

The Xianfeng emperor was born in 1831 (Daoguang 11) and had a half brother, Yixin who was his own age but had a different mother and was later ennobled as Prince Gong. Xianfeng's mother died when he ws 10 *sui* and he was brought up by Yixin's mother, a concubine [who later became the Empress Xiaojing]. The two boys were like brothers, studied together and practiced the military arts together. However Yixin was clever by nature and his intelligence and bravery surpassed that of his 'brother'. The Daoguang emperor chose tutors for the two boys but their characters were completely different. Xianfeng's tutor, Du Shoutian, was a typical sham Confucian, only teaching his student how to feign an appearance of benevolence in order to curry favour with the ageing emperor, his father. Yixin's tutor, Zhuo Bingtian was well-known as an able official who had experience of a number of senior military and government posts and, at meetings of the nine chief ministers was noted for his ability at arguing. In teaching his pupil he also spoke frankly to him about domestic and foreign affairs. In his later years the Daoguang emperor wanted to designate an heir to the throne in secret and the two brothers were subjected to moral tests. Xianfeng was selected although his intelligence and ability in the political arts were inferior to those of his brother. The overriding reason that Xianfeng was chosen was that he displayed filial loyalty and kindness; Yixin was brave and martial but dare not speak, and was declared not to have the qualities of an emperor.

This was how the boy who would become the Xianfeng emperor acquired the great prize, succeeding to the throne at the age of only nineteen and, needless to say, the imperial tutor had to be consulted about 'the affairs of state and the promotion and demotion of senior officials'. It cannot be said that Du Shoutian did not do some good things. The Xianfeng emperor reinstated Lin Zexu and Xiang Rong to suppress uprisings in Guangxi, and both were

recommended by him. But he died in 1851 (Xianfeng 1) and it is difficult to say whether it was fortunate or not that Xianfeng had to lose this long winded imperial tutor. Generally speaking after this the Xianfeng emperor could concentrate on dealing with his 'younger brother', Prince Gong. In 1855 (Xianfeng 5) the emperor's stepmother, the mother of Prince Gong, died and the emperor issued an edict severely criticising Prince Gong for being 'negligent with ceremony and propriety', the implication being that he had behaved in an unfilial way; Xianfeng dismissed Prince Gong from all of his military and government posts, clearly intending to remove any contenders for his throne.

It is possible that heaven grants the wishes of men and, the year after the Xianfeng emperor had excluded Prince Gong from government, a 'beautiful woman' he had previously chosen as a palace maid, became pregnant and presented the emperor with a son. For fear that the emperor would otherwise be without legitimate offspring, the mother of the imperial son was promoted from concubine (*pin*) to imperial concubine (*fei*). However the Xianfeng emperor had been a reader of history since his young days and clearly what his tutor had taught him about the designation of an heir during the Han, Jin and Northern dynasties had had a profound influence on him. He was the seventh emperor and had only one son; none of the concubines subsequently gave birth to boys so how could he not be anxious that after his death the mother of his son might become a queen as happened in the two Han dynasties and the Northern Wei. In the end he was a weakling and although he perceived that the mother of his only son was obsessively ambitions he dare not emulate the Han dynasty emperor Wudi or the first emperor of the Northern Wei and designate his son as the heir but kill the mother. As he approached his last days he gave the empress a secret edict saying that after his death if it was discovered that the mother of his successor was arrogant, wilful and unlawful she could be executed. However the emperor could not enforce this in his lifetime and after his death it was beyond his control.

Since he could not even manage his wives and concubines did this emperor really 'rule the realm and pacify all under heaven?' Xianfeng reigned in China for 11 years but, as can be imagined he was at a loss to know how to deal with the internal turmoil and external aggression that China was faced with, especially the invasion by European powers.

This emperor who was born nine years before the Opium War between Britain and the Qing empire, at the age of 6 *sui* received the teachings in defence of moral principles from his tutor Du Shoutian. By the age of 19 he was already heavily influenced by officials with their heads full of Neo Confucian teachings and prejudices such as 'respect for the sovereign and inferiority of officials', 'use Chinese to change barbarians' and 'three cardinal

guides' [ruler-subject; father–son; husband-wife]. Of course his head was also full of sorrow at the way 'Western barbarians' were changing the ancestral system of the Manchus. After he had ascended the throne, he did not appear to be overly anxious about the Taiping rebels who were occupying southern China and official armies sent to suppress these rebels, and the Hunan and Huai armies and the local gentry militias that had been permitted to fight the civil war gave a feeling of self confidence. But faced with the threat of invasion by the Western powers he had been panic-stricken from the start, especially by the demands made by the British, French, Russian, American and others who had dispatched envoys to Beijing. From Daoguang 30 to Xianfeng 10 this emperor sent innumerable edicts to the governors and governors-general of the coastal provinces, in which the key point was how to stop the Western powers from entering Beijing to revise the treaties or set up embassies. This spurred the European enemies, Britain, France and Tsarist Russia, who, faced with the refusal by the Qing to allow them to establish diplomatic representation in the capital, conclude a 'united front'. Therefore when British and French forces occupied Beijing in in 1860 (Xianfeng 10), conflict, known as the Second Opium War, became unavoidable.

The essays 'From Qianlong to Jiaqing' and 'The Daoguang Emperor and his Prime Minister' can be found in *Yindiao weiding de chuantong* Liaoning Educational Press, 1995, and contain some investigation into the history of ideas and culture in the late Qing period.

In the late Qing, from the Jiaqing and Daoguang to the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns, relations between China and the West led inevitably to war. How his court dealt with this obviously needs more research.

27 May 2008.

Essay 58

A Historical Paradox

On 25 February 1850 (Daoguang 30), the 69 year old Emperor Xuanzong, in spite of being seriously ill, summoned Manchu and Han Chinese nobles and senior officials to promulgate a vermillion edict, designating the fourth imperial son as heir to the throne and enobling the sixth son as prince. He died shortly afterwards. Within twelve hours the fourth son was formally enthroned as emperor, which can be said to have been extremely fortunate.

However by the time he reached the age of 20, and had just begun to rule as the 7th generation Manchu Qing emperor reigning as Xianfeng, a series of misfortunes occurred. The first was foreign aggression. Tsarist Russia had begun to annex large areas of the ancestral lands of the Manchus, and shortly afterwards British and French forces instigated the Second Opium War on the southern frontiers. The next was civil war: there had been flare-ups of popular rebellion in various parts of the south and these soon became blended with the Taiping rebellion that set the plains ablaze; they established their Heavenly Capital, Tianjing, found support in the Nian rebellion and divided China, sharing it with the Manchus. Even more unfortunate was the attack on and occupation of Beijing by the English and French combined armies in 1860 (Xianfeng 7). The city that had been the capital of the empire for 216 years fell into enemy hands for the first time in the historical record and in the following year, 21 August 1861, the emperor fell ill and died at Rehe, at the age of only 31.

Although the Xianfeng emperor, who was given the posthumous temple name of Wenzong, was a wealthy member of the Manchu household, he had had some experience as a result of the struggles over the imperial succession. When he fulfilled his ambition of ascending the throne, he thought at first that he could do what he wished. For example soon after becoming emperor he was faced with a memorial from the Censorate; he indicated that he would heed them but soon punished his father's trusted officials, Muzhanga and Qiying, and recalled Lin Zexu, to demonstrate his commitment to 'reform'. However heaven was no help to him and foreign aggression and internal disorder continued. He and his trusted aides were all deeply superstitious about the mediaeval traditions of numerology. The appendix to the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*) from the Han period predicted that each new dynasty would encounter 106 days of misfortune, such as a great drought. The Xianfeng emperor actually had been on the throne for eleven and a half years when the series of difficulties arose and the authors of the *Qingshigao*, published at the beginning of

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the Republic used the images of the *Yijing* and described how Wenzong had enjoyed a period of good fortune but with the 'darkening of the light', external forces and internal conflict combined together and there was not a day's peace.

However the writers of the section on the records of Wenzong in the *Qingshigao* followed this by 'evaluating' the Xianfeng emperor, concluding that in the middle of misfortune, 'he was able to appoint wise and talented people and understand vexations, controlling the army by being at its head'.

It is suggested that if Xianfeng had not died young, and if his autocratic rule had been extended, then the subsequent calamities that the nation suffered, that is the Empress Dowager Cixi's administering the affairs of state from behind the curtain on three occasions, might not have occurred and the Great Qing Empire might have continued for anther hundred generations.

History has never rejected hypotheses. In fact it was not only that the Xianfeng emperor's policies were ineffective, he himself had changed into an itinerant desperado. Apart from his many consorts and concubines there were also widows and others privately purchased from among the general populace, but only one of the palace women, the one from the Nara family, gave him a son. Therefore he was basically unwilling to prevent himself from acknowledging the tradition established by the Yongzheng emperor, Gaozu, in designating an heir. Like his father the Daoguang emperor, there was leeway in choosing a successor. Of course he had a choice, in the tradition of the Xianbei ancestors [of the Manchus] during the Northern Dynasties he could designate the son and kill the mother, and also use as a pretext continuing the precedent established by Han Wudi of designating the younger son and killing the mother. It is said that when the Xianfeng emperor was on the point of death in Rehe, he presented the future Empress Dowager Ci'an with a secret vermillion edict, which said that if it were discovered that the Nara woman [Cixi] had used her son to become arrogant, wilful and flout the law, she could be put to death, thus proving that the Xianfeng emperor was familiar with the traditions of the Han and Wei dynasties; but this emperor was not able to do it himself. He was fully aware of the fact that the Manchu Qing had long had a tradition of dictatorial empresses, on the basis of the fact that the 'mother's honour increases with the status of her son', and dare not offend the mother of his only son, but hoped to guard against power passing into her hands after his death and entrusted the heir to the care of another empress, who had no son.

The Xianfeng emperor was on the throne for eleven and a half years and this was really the critical period for the life or death of the Qing dynasty. However as an individual this emperor should be classified as the monarch of a dying nation; the empire did not die out. The capital fell into the hands of the enemy but the dynasty remained in existence, only half of the land of China remained

but the name of the empire was still there. The monarch died in exile but his son could still be restored to the throne. Similar paradoxes can provide some explanation for the historical truth, but although there are historical textbooks with many different explanations, it is difficult to be completely convinced by them.

Paradoxes are part of history and of course it is not possible to replace history with logic. What is the historical truth?

25 May 2008.

ESSAY 59

The Burning of the Old Summer Palace

The burning down of the Old Summer Palace, the Yuanmingyuan, on 18 October 1860 (Xianfeng 10) is almost a century and a half ago. There are many historical and literary works describing or commenting on this event but unfortunately quite a few present strange theories which are not at all in line with the historical reality.

The arson of the Old Summer Palace was by the 1st Division of the British Army invading China; acting on orders from the British envoy to China, Lord Elgin, they burned to ruins the Summer Palace itself and four other smaller buildings and gardens.

The five gardens with their buildings became a much reduced garden. On 22 September of that year, the Xianfeng emperor had received reports that the Qing army had been defeated by British and French forces at Baliqiao on the outskirts of Beijing, so, taking with him his wives and concubines and part of the nobility and senior officials, he gave up the Old Summer Palace and fled in panic towards the subsidiary palace in Rehe. Four days later, the British and French troops forced their way inside the walls of Beijing and routed with little difficulty the Manchu and Mongol banner forces under Senggerinchin and Ruilin. On 6 October the French forces charged into the Old Summer Palace for the first time and immediately set about looting it. The following day the British forces also entered and the two 'robber bands' (as the French writer Victor Hugo has described them) competed in the plundering.

On 9 October the *New York Times* carried a long report on the looting. It spoke of indescribable scenes and looting of anything whatever, from reception rooms, state guest rooms and even private bedrooms and the women's quarters. In some of the gardens all of the buildings were looted until they were empty. Chinese and foreign artefacts were stolen, including jewellery boxes, porcelain watches and furniture and those that were too big to carry were smashed on the spot. About three-quarters of the valuables belonging to the emperor were destroyed or stolen by the French.

However the British and French forces were not satisfied with this. They threatened Prince Gong, who had been left behind as a peace commissioner by the emperor when he fled the capital, that if he did not open the city they would attack it. So, without a drop of blood being shed, they occupied the imperial city of Beijing. At this time Elgin sent a letter to the French special

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envoy J.B.L. Gros, proposing the destruction of the Old Summer Palace. Gros did not approve as he wished to preserve the famous palace and gardens, but he did agree to the destruction of part of the detached palace within the city. Elgin went ahead on his own account and ordered the British forces to set fire to the Old Summer Palace.

Why did Elgin insist on destroying the Old Summer Palace? One explanation that was put forward at the end of the Qing dynasty suggested that it was the idea of a Chinese, the eldest son of Gong Zizhen, Gong Cheng, who knew English and at that time was acting as the amanuensis and secretary of Elgin's counsellor, Thomas Wade. It is said that Gong Cheng came up with this strange plan, the object of which was to deflect the anger of the foreigners and save the lives of 100,000 in the capital. This story spread very widely and even a few years ago people were cursing Gong Cheng as a traitor and were convinced that he was the ringleader of the plot to burn down the Old Summer Palace. This theory is not in accordance with historical facts and has been discussed in 'Gong Cheng and the burning of the Old Summer Palace' in Coming out of the Middle Ages, Volume 2, Fudan University Press, 2008, pp. 248–254.

The causes and effects of this process are detailed in the corpus of official documents of the Manchu Qing, *Chouban yiwu shimo, Xianfeng chao* (*The Management of Barbarian Affairs from Beginning to End, Xianfeng reign*). This was first compiled in 1867 (Tongzhi 6): the director-general of the project, Guan Baojian, served as supervisor of the Imperial Household at the time of the burning of the Old Summer Palace; and the deputy director-general, Wen Xiang, was the only senior official of the Grand Council who remained in Beijing at that time to assist Prince Gong in the peace negotiations with the British and French forces. The materials that have been selected and preserved are relatively authentic. The section on foreign relations in the Xianfeng reign in *Jindai Zhongguo shishi rizhi* (*Daily Chronology of Historical Events in Modern China* Zhonghua Press, 1963) by Guo Tingyi draws heavily on materials in that work. Annals are valuable for understanding the trend of the times and of interest to readers of history and there is no harm in looking at them.

It is not possible to examine the official documents in *Chouban yiwu shimo* closely here. As with all official and unofficial historical materials of the Qing period, there are different narratives for the same events which are often mutually contradictory and it is difficult to avoid being weighed down by trivial details of textual criticism. Some reasonably certain historical facts are set out simply below.

1. After the British and French military invasion of China that is known to history as the Second Opium War, in 1858 (Xianfeng 8) the Qing court signed separate 'Treaties of Tianjin' with special emissaries of the British and the French, temporarily halting hostilities. However the Xianfeng emperor immediately reneged on them and would not agree to ambassadors of Britain, France, Russia and the United States being stationed in Beijing, or to British vessels entering the Yangzi River; and demanded that Gui Liang and other senior officials involved in the negotiations should make further representations, 'not sparing anyone's feelings and not using language that shows solicitude.'
2. The British were repeatedly consulted unsuccessfully but sent ships to the Dagu forts with the intention of forcing a landing to safeguard their diplomatic envoy who had entered Beijing to 'exchange notes', and unexpectedly in the middle of July their attack failed. The Xianfeng emperor was outwardly threatening but at heart cowardly and was trying to impose peace with the British by military means and also hoping to drive a wedge between the British, French, Russians and Americans. This did not succeed. The French decided with the British that they should send a joint force to encroach on Beijing and Tianjin. This was in 1859 (Xianfeng 9).
3. In 1860 (Xianfeng 10), the Qing court was continually being defeated by the Taiping rebels. British and French forces declared war on the Qing and in June of the same year occupied Tanggu [where the Dagu forts were located], again attacked Tianjin and continued simultaneously to fight and negotiate with the Qing, pushing ahead to Tongzhou.
4. On 9 September 1860 the Xianfeng emperor issued an edict that he would personally take command of military operations and this provoked great panic in the government and the wider population, because it was known that the emperor was preparing to abandon Beijing and flee to the north. The Imperial Commissioner, Zaiyuan, and others delivered a note to Elgin and Gros, asking that they send representatives to Tongzhou to negotiate a peace agreement. The British and French sent Harry Parkes [one of Elgin's Chinese secretaries] and he arrived at the meeting with several dozen officials and reporters. It transpired that Zaiyuan had received secret instructions from the Xianfeng emperor; if the discussions broke down, the 'key conspirators', including Parkes, were to be detained and held hostage. Because Parkes refused to perform the kowtow when meeting the emperor, Zaiyuan ordered Senggerinchin to arrest him and his 39-strong retinue, 26 British and 13 French. Troops under the

command of Shengbao killed two people on the spot and the others were all sent under escort to Beijing and imprisoned in the prison run by the Board of Punishments and known as the 'Celestial Pen', where they were ill-treated. Thomas William Bowlby, the correspondent of *The Times* was the first to die.

5. During the flight of the Xianfeng emperor to Rehe, the princes and ministers remaining in Beijing received secret instructions that Harry Parkes was to be prepared for an interview with officials; if the British and French attacked the city, he was to be executed. Prince Gong, who had moved Parkes out of the prison and was treating him well, entreated him to write a letter to Elgin to allow peace talks, but dare not disobey the imperial edict and release Parkes and the others.
6. The British and French forces looted the Old Summer Palace and occupied the imperial city in Beijing, released the hostages and discovered that only 19 of the 37 people incarcerated in the 'Celestial Pen' were still alive. Elgin was faced with the problem of communicating with the Queen's government and Parliament. He was especially concerned about the reaction of the British public to the death in Qing captivity of the celebrated correspondent of *The Times*. He rejected the suggestions of the French envoy, Gros, and did not agree to the destruction of the Qing Palace in place of the Old Summer Palace, not on the grounds that it was more ancient but because the Old Summer Palace of the Qing emperors was well known throughout Europe. Not only was it the real political centre of the Celestial Empire but the orders of the Manchu Qing emperor to shackle, torture and kill the British and French hostages had been issued there. Whether it was a decision to make clear that he was taking revenge, or whether this was to cover up the crimes of looting and putting to the torch this world class garden, was it not avoiding responsibility for the harm done to the hostages?

According to letters written by Elgin to his family that were uncovered after his death, 'looting and trampling over that place [the Old Summer Palace] was bad enough but far worse was destroying it'.

Of course we can condemn the hypocrisy of this English lord, but, compared with his political adversary, the Xianfeng emperor, who, just because the 'foreign barbarian' was unwilling to bend the knee and kowtow to him, would rather lose his capital city and die in exile, was there anything to choose between them in terms of fraudulent benevolence and righteousness?

There had been nine generations and ten emperors since the Manchus came through the passes to occupy Beijing. Leaving aside the last emperor, who took

the reign title of Xuantong, the Xianfeng emperor was on the throne for eleven years and ruled for the shortest time of all the emperors of the Qing dynasty. The burning down of the Old Summer Palace was possibly the ultimate reason why he is so little studied.

18 January 2009, revised at night.

ESSAY 60

More on the Burning of the Old Summer Palace

The burning of the Old Summer Palace that took place on 18 October 1860 was a man-made disaster rather than a natural one. The arsonists responsible for the three day conflagration were the British unit commanded by Michel, part of the British and French forces that had invaded China, but the principal culprit who issued the orders to torch this world famous palace and garden complex was the British envoy negotiating with China, Lord Elgin. Elgin's pretext was retaliation for the Qing imperial commanders Zaiyuan and Shengbao shackling and torturing to death British and French hostages but it was also to cover up the actions of the British and French forces in looting the Old Summer Palace. Western reports at the time indicate that it was French troops who tried to be the first to enter the Old Summer Palace to look for the treasures of the emperor, but that after the event the French special envoy, Gros, disagreed with the destruction of these famous palaces and gardens and proposed instead to Elgin that they should destroy a detached palace inside Beijing city walls in retaliation. Chinese and Western documents provide supporting evidence for these claims. See my 'Gong Teng and the burning of the Old Summer Palace', first published in *Wenhuibao Literary Supplement* and collected in *Coming out of the Middle Ages*, Volume 2, Fudan University Press, 2008.

The French and British troops looted and burned down the Old Summer Palace and then occupied the entire city of Beijing, forcing the Qing court to sign separate peace treaties with the British and the French; a year previously Marx had pointed out when criticising the Treaty of Tianjin signed by the Qing with the British, French, Russians and Americans, 'In fact from this piratical war between Britain and China, the only country that gained real benefit was Russia ('The new war with China'). However from the point of view of the Qing rulers the Second Opium War that was prosecuted by the British and French and ended with the burning of the Old Summer Palace was an episode of deep shame and humiliation unprecedented since the Qing entered Beijing 260 years previously.

The old site of the Yuanmingyuan [Old Summer Palace] was the Qinghua palace of Li Wei, the Marquis of Wuqing during the Wanli reign period. In the Qing reign of Kangxi it became known as the Yangchunyuan and in 1709 (Kangxi 18) it was given to be used as a villa to the fourth son of the emperor, Prince Yong, who ordered that it be named Yuanming. In 1725 (Yongzheng 3) the emperor had a temporary palace or lodge built in the grounds where the business of the

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state could be carried out in the summer months. After the Qianlong emperor came to the throne, the work continued and in the east of the park two more gardens were constructed, Changchun (Garden of Eternal Spring) and Qichun (Garden of Elegant Spring) which was later changed to Wanchun (Garden of Ten Thousand Springs). The three gardens around the Fuhai lake were together called the Yuanmingyuan and occupied 320 hectares of which 35% was water; and hundreds of buildings large and small were distributed throughout the estate. There were grand palaces such as the Daguangming and many other characteristic buildings. In the Changshou Garden were the Western Buildings designed by the Italian Jesuit, Guiseppe Castiglione and there was also a group of buildings in the contemporary French rococo style, one of the forty views of the palace complex.

The Qianlong emperor spared no expense in the flesh and blood of the people and spent million upon million of silver taels to extend the Yuanmingyuan. Compared with the Forbidden City the scale of the palaces and halls was rather modest but the beauty of the gardens and trees surpassed it and living there did not involve the same pressures to conform to the 'ancestral system' as in the 'great within' of the Forbidden City: clothing, food were not necessarily as conventional and the atmosphere was far more relaxed. As is widely known, the early Qing emperors would go to Rehe for the 'autumn hunt' year after year, taking with them a vast retinue and this became a routine, initially to ensure the preservation of the Manchu martial traditions. By the Qianlong reign it had become a mechanical and reserved temporary excursion from the Forbidden City and a cause for gossip. However in the later years of the Jiaqing reign, the Eight Trigrams Sect led by Lin Qing, in collusion with eunuch officials inside and outside the palace took the opportunity of the emperor's absence on the 'autumn hunt' and launched a surprise attack on the Forbidden City. From that time onwards neither the Jiaqing emperor nor his son the Daoguang emperor dare leave the capital. By the time the Xianfeng emperor was on the throne, not only did he have to contend with internal rebellion and external hostility, but he was only interested in sensual pleasures. Apart from the fact that he had no alternative but to return to the palace to perform the traditional Manchu rituals according to the ancestral system, he spent all his time fooling around in the Old Summer Palace. The impact of this was that the Old Summer Palace replaced the Forbidden City, becoming the centre of gravity of the ruler from where orders were issued and to where riches and treasure accrued.

No more will be said here about the progress of the long premeditated attack by British and French forces on Beijing but the Xianfeng emperor's response will be considered. The joint forces had attacked the outskirts of the capital but he still rejected the requests of their envoys for talks, insisting that the 'foreign

barbarians' must kowtow when they met him, otherwise he would take personal command of his armies. He even concocted this countermove: to negotiate graciously in order to induce the joint forces to send peace negotiators and then shackle them and take them hostage to force the 'barbarian chiefs' to submit. As the troops neared the city walls, still hoping that there was a slim chance of avoiding the possibility of the capital being destroyed, the emperor by a petty trick cut off that remote possibility. Therefore the British and French forces had a new reason for a military occupation of the city. The emperor, on hearing that the forces commanded by Shengbao had suffered a heavy defeat at Baliqiao, immediately fled the Old Summer Palace with his wives, concubines and closest advisers, saying that he was going 'on the autumn hunt at Mulan'. This was the first instance of the collapse of the imperial capital since the Manchus had taken control of China 260 years previously as has already been discussed.

The Xianfeng emperor's flight was on 22 September 1860 (Xianfang 10) and ten days later he reached the palace in Rehe, the Mountain Estate for Escaping the Heat in the city of Chengde. After a further six days French forces entered and looted the Old Summer Palace, followed on the following day by the British. On the eighteenth day of the Xianfeng emperor's peaceful sojourn at the Mountain Estate for Escaping the Heat, Elgin gave orders to burn down the Summer Palace.

Even before the emperor escaped, the court in Beijing had been handed over to his younger brother Prince Gong to put things in order. Prince Gong was far more competent than his elder brother and had worked out that the British forces did not have a plan to occupy Beijing in the long term, and that the British and French special envoys each had their own plans for how to blackmail the Qing court. The Russian envoy was anxious to pull his chestnuts out of the fire and therefore by means of haggling finally made peace, naturally paying a heavy price. On 1 November of the same year the French forces withdrew from Beijing and a week later the British also left; Elgin and Gros left at the same time.

Needless to say Prince Gong was intelligent. Each move that he made was reported to his imperial brother hiding in Chengde and, after Elgin and the others left Beijing, he issued a joint memorial in the names of all the court officials who remained in Beijing requesting the emperor to 'return in the imperial chariot', pointing out that the time was ripe. Afterwards Prince Gong repeated the request on a number of occasions but the emperor replied that 'the weather is somewhat cold so I will temporarily postpone my return'. Prince Gong and the others considered that the emperor did not want to return to Beijing to meet on equal terms the British, French, Russian, American and

other envoys who were already established in Beijing and proposed that the emperor undertake a 'western tour of inspection', and make Xi'an the 'auxiliary capital' in order to command the national military campaign against the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. This was rejected and Prince Gong was anxious; the following year, in April 1861, he sent a memorial requesting that he go to the emperor's 'temporary abode' to meet him. He received a reply from the emperor in his own hand to the effect that he was ill with a cough and bloody sputum and that it was not convenient to talk at this time and it could wait until the autumn.

The message in this handwritten communication was the truth because even before the autumn, on 20 August 1861 (Xianfeng 11), the emperor passed away at his palace in Rehe, at the age of only 31. But the message did not contain the whole truth. The emperor had delegated his princely younger brother to deal with the 'foreign barbarians' in Beijing, including permitting them to establish the unprecedented Zongli Yamen [a prototype Ministry of Foreign Affairs] and ordered them to assume the posts of ministers in this body. How could he then not permit Prince Gong to travel to Chengde which was only a few hundred li away to explain the principles in person. The explanation for this can only be a secret.

30 May 2008, at night.

ESSAY 61

Sushun

In order to understand the political situation during the reign of the Xianfeng emperor it is important not to overlook the role of Sushun.

Sushun was of the Manchu imperial clan and the Bordered Blue Banner. His ancestor eight generations previously, Jirgalang, together with Dorgon, had been at the helm of the state in the early years of the Shunzhi reign and was subsequently enobled as Prince Zheng. So although this clan were a distant branch of the royal family, individuals in direct line of descent had first fallen and then risen during the three reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong. It is said that Sushun's father Prince Zheng, Ulgungga, set eyes on the beautiful daughter of a wealthy Muslim family and intrigued to make her his concubine; in 1816 (Jiaqing 21) she gave birth to Sushun, his son and heir.

In 1836 (Daoguang 16) Sushun was appointed a noble of the imperial lineage of the third rank and designated an Assistant Chamberlain. Initially he was said to have been just like the other wealthy youths of the Eight Banner families, given to eating drinking and partying, but his official career was plain sailing and the progress of his career can be seen in the palace archives (see *Qingshi liezhuan, juan* 47). His half brother, Duanhua, a descendant of Prince Zheng, obtained the confidence of the Xianfeng emperor who in 1854 (Xianfeng 4) recommended him for the position of Guard of the Imperial Antechamber. He became adept at deducing the intentions of the emperor and was quick witted and resourceful in a crisis and rapidly became devoted to the young emperor.

Since the Yongzheng emperor had driven the Manchu Qing monarchical system towards an extreme autocracy, his son the Qianlong emperor, whose long rule lasted for almost 64 years, codified the autocratic system. Most of the Manchu emperors who succeeded him were not mediocre monarchs but their autocratic authority often provoked challenges from the aristocracy of the imperial clan. It can be said that absolute power led to absolute corruption, at least as demonstrated by imperial politics after the later years of the Qianlong reign.

However with a mediocre emperor on the throne, the rise of powerful officials was inevitable, and this is a feature in despotic monarchical systems throughout history. The Daoguang emperor was on the throne for 30 years: in the first half of his reign his main confidant was Cao Jianyong whose family had been wealthy salt merchants and in the second half it was the Manchu bondservant Muzhanga, the latter a leading official in the Grand Council for

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15 years. They had different backgrounds but were both skilled at interpreting the intentions of the emperor and at political manipulation (see the author's *Yindiao weiding de chuantong*, Liaoning Press, 1995 pp. 173–8).

In the early years of Xianfeng's reign there were many natural disasters (see records in the Natural Disasters section of the *Qingshigao*) but the most serious threats came from the rebellion of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in the south and the continual aggression of the British and Russians on the northern frontiers. It should be pointed out that some of first his actions in the year in which he ascended the throne were to condemn the Senior Grand Secretary, Muzhanga, and the Grand Secretary, Qiying, denouncing them both as traitors in an imperial edict for being the arch criminals responsible for internal disorder and external disasters in the late Daoguang period. At least he was 'as poisonous as his father' and their sentiments were the same. The Daoguang emperor, who had surrendered the sovereign rights of the country in humiliating terms, shifted the blame onto others. He considered that the dragon throne was quite safe, and the defeat on its northern march of units of the Taiping armies meant that the threat to Beijing was almost resolved. His playboy nature also began to show. He bestowed his favours on the younger generation of the Eight Banners who were very similar to him in temperament and the mainstays of his personnel were Prince Yi Daiyuan, Prince Zheng Duanhua and Sushun.

It is difficult to narrate the history knowing the people and the times. Historians take different views of the relationship of such matters as subjectivity and objectivity, motive and effect, but do not agree. Sushun was the real power in the later years of the Xianfeng reign. His background in a remote branch of the imperial clan and with a Muslim mother led the Manchu emperor to treat him as a relative, but with contempt. He used political trickery in advancing his position to become an official close to the emperor and ridiculed important Manchu and Han officials. He gained the confidence of the Xianfeng emperor, arrogated power to himself and dominated the court, the historical effect of which must be analysed.

Scholars who consider the progress of Qing history all accept that the administrative system with Manchus at the centre and Han on the outside was a chronic ailment of the entire Qing dynasty. The crushing defeat in the war with the British during the Daoguang reign and the Qing court letting the Eight Banner aristocracy take the lead in military matters illustrate this.

In the early part of the Xianfeng reign, the Taiping and the Nian rebellions broke out at the same time; the Qing court despatched troops under bannermen commanders to suppress them and they lost battle after battle. The influential Manchu, Wenqing, initially advised that 'in the circumstances Han

officers should be used', therefore Zeng Guofan, Hu Linyi and others of the Hunan gentry were able to begin reversing the failures in battle, using the militias that they had created. However in August 1854 (Xianfeng 4) when Zeng Guofan led combined land and waterborne units of the Hunan army to attack Taiping forces that were occupying Wuhan, the Xianfeng emperor was delighted to hear of their victory but after negative comments by Qi Juncao and other members of the Grand Council about the dangers to the state of using Chinese militia went back to despatching Manchu bannermen and officers. Wenqing died soon afterwards and Qi and others were squeezed out by Sushun and forced to resign. Sushun continued with the policy advised by Wenqing and used his access to the emperor to support the use of the Hunan army as the main force to attack the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

It is said that Sushun very much disdained Manchus, and made it clear to anyone that, 'Our bannermen are good for nothing, and know nothing' and 'Manchus are muddleheaded and illogical. They cannot exert themselves for the nation and can only beg'. He had considerable respect for Han Chinese officials, often saying that, 'Han people are not able to give offence but when they take up their pens they can be quite fierce'. Therefore as he seized power and took bribes he only knocked on the bamboo poles of the bannermen and did not ask Han for bribes. He made every effort to have top flight Han officials in his entourage. Among these was Guo Songtao, Zeng Guofan who was persuaded to take an official position after the death of his father and was registered as Vice President of the Board of Rites, and Hu Linyi who initiated the formation of the Hunan Army and became the sworn enemy of the Taipings.

Sushun particularly paid heed to the advice of Gao Xinkui and Wang Kaiyun, Han officials on his staff, and protected Zuo Zongtang, only a provincial level graduate, ensuring that he avoided the death penalty. The Xianfeng emperor had heard rumours from informers and firmly believed that the governor of Hunan, Luo Bingzhang, was manipulating Zuo Zongtang and plotting a military coup so he had decided but not yet announced that Zuo should be put to death. Not only was Zuo a capable general in the defeat of the Taiping, he had also been a noted commander of the forces resisting the Russians and bringing Xinjiang into the empire as a province.

There is of course another side to the issue. In the battle with the English and French forces the Xianfeng emperor contradicted himself and advocated first war and then peace, right up to the end departing from the mediaeval tradition of, 'when two countries are at war you do not slay the messenger'. He directed Zaiyuan and the Manchu and Mongolian commanders including Sheng Bao and Senggelinchin to shackle and torture representatives of the British and French forces who were sent to negotiate peace and the journalists

who accompanied them, a decision that finally brought about the 'burning of the Old Summer Palace, although it was said that the original idea was Sushun's.

As the Xianfeng emperor lay dying in Rehe where he has fled, Sushun was appointed Imperial Assistant in National Affairs with seven other senior officials, although he was the key one. After the coup by the surviving empresses that overthrew this regency in 1861 he was executed.

3 June 2008, at night.

ESSAY 62

The Coup against the Regency and Sushun

After the Manchus occupied Beijing in 1644 there were many palace coups. For example in 1651 (Shunzhi 8) the Shunzhi emperor Shizu, Aisin Gioro Fulin, had only been ruling in his own right for two months when he posthumously stripped his uncle Dorgon of his honorary imperial title of Emperor Yi Chengzu and cleaned out his Manchu and Han associates in the bureaucracy. In 1669 (Kangxi 8) while the Kangxi emperor Shengzu, who was only 16 years old, was training a group of youths in his guards he seized the dictatorial sole regent Oboi and had his faction executed but allowed Oboi to live. The Kangxi emperor doted on his personal household and had 35 sons by Manchu, Mongol and Han wives and concubines; as they grew up this led to conflict between the sons, who had their eyes on the imperial succession. In his later years, Kangxi twice nominated an heir but on both occasions this led to bitter conflict. In 1722 (Kangxi 61) the future Yongzheng emperor, Prince Yinzhen, announced that his father the emperor had breathed his last and this put the political arena into a state of commotion. The new emperor, whose posthumous temple name would be Shizong, immediately set about dealing with the feuding princes in such a way that for three hundred years historians would still be debating what really happened in the coup. His son, Gaozong Hongli, later the Qianlong emperor, as emperor and then emperor emeritus arrogated all powers to himself for a period of 64 years, suppressed the whole nation so that neither a crow nor a sparrow dare make a sound, and considered himself to be the perfect elderly person. But when the Jiaqing emperor, Yongyan, had not even been on the throne for three years, suddenly the world was amazed by a brilliant feat, the death sentence on Qianlong's trusted courtier at the end of his reign.

The Heshen case in 1799 (Jiaqing 4), and other palace coups in the Qing dynasty before it, all involved members of the Manchu elite and the effect was to destroy the traditional democratic military system of the Manchus and continually strengthen the position of the Aisin Gioro clan chieftains as autocratic monarchs. It also weakened the effectiveness of the Manchus as the rulers of a cohesive Manchu, Mongol and Han conquering force. During the Qianlong period the White Lotus rebellion broke out in the central part of the empire, which caused Bao Shizhe, Hong Liangji and others to warn of a systemic crisis and also, in the early part of the Jiaqing reign made Gong Zizhen predict that if 'self-reform' was rejected, the ruling line of Aisin Gioro would die out. They

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all pointed out that the key to the survival of the empire was internal and not external and was at the top rather than at the bottom; behind a 'peaceful era' there should be the assumption that 'chaos is not far away'.

As might be expected during the Opium War between the Qing and Britain, the Daoguang emperor replaced Lin Zexu and other Chinese officials with close relatives or courtiers of the Manchu elite; this created chaos in the military which suffered the humiliation of losing troops and territory and having to pay reparations. However the real danger to the empire was armed rebellion by the lower orders in the south.

When the Xianfeng emperor came to the throne this womanising eighth generation monarch appeared to be mediocre and unambitious. His favourite courtier Sushun, an offshoot of the Manchu royal house played the role of Grand Chamberlain. He recruited exceptional Chinese officials from the south as secretaries and these influenced the Xianfeng emperor. He reinstated Zeng Guofan, Hu Linyi and others who had created militias on their own initiative to deal with the Taipings. He did his best to protect the sacred monster Zuo Zongtang, who achieved victory in the civil war for the Qing and also overcame the armed rebellion in Xinjiang and became a respected general. He frequently cursed, 'our bannermen who are good for nothing, and know nothing' and said 'Manchus are muddleheaded and illogical. They cannot exert themselves for the nation and can only beg'. This already doomed him to be sentenced to death in the coup against the regency by the empresses in 1861. Before the death of the Xianfeng emperor he had taken part in secret discussions as to whether or not Han Wudi's precedent of 'designate the son as heir and kill the mother' should be emulated, thus eliminating Concubine Yi of the Nara family and the potential thorn in the flesh of an 'empress dowager'.

The biography of Sushun in the *Qingshigao* refers to his relationship with the Xianfeng emperor and his management of the affairs of state, including his role in the executions of Qiying in 1858 after failed negotiations with the British and French and of Grand Secretary Bojun for examination fraud. It also details his presidency of the Board of Revenue where he battled against corruption and the part he played in diplomatic affairs.

At the end of the Qing and the beginning of the Republic contradictory arguments were expressed about the 1861 coup and Chinese and overseas historians writing about Sushun all stated clearly that criticisms of Sushun's administration during the reign of the Xianfeng emperor were not exaggerated. After various plots by Cixi and Prince Gong had succeeded, they issued an edict, claiming to be in the name of the infant emperor, setting out the crimes of the 'three traitors' (Sushun, Prince Yi and Prince Zheng). Many works related to the 1861 coup were published on the mainland towards the end of the

twentieth century but of these, Wang Kaixi *Taihou chuilian: Cixi Yixin zhengbianji* (*Empress Dowager as Regent: the coup by Cixi and Yixin, Prince Gong*) Zhonghua Press, 2007 advances the discussion most.

The *Draft History of the Qing* has been castigated for being protective of Manchu Qing 'orthodoxy' and was banned by the Guomindang government in Nanjing. But this mediaeval style 'orthodoxy' is imbued with the ideology of 'Confucian orthodoxy' and 'legal authority' for the prolongation of the regime. Cixi had used her position as the Xianfeng emperor's relict to assume the status of her son by him and become empress dowager, for which there was no precedent in Qing history. As her son was a child she was able to 'hold court behind a screen' [hearing reports from ministers in her capacity as empress regent], an even greater violation of the Manchu Qing 'ancestral system'. On this point the essay on Sushun in the *Draft History of the Qing* argues that no blame should be attached to Sushun and the others for their opposition to the regency of Cixi; on the contrary, this queen who monopolised power for 47 years and rarely showed any consideration for others used distortion and metaphor to characterise Sushun's behaviours as opposition to Cixi, when he was really defending the legality of imperial laws and institutions.

The biography of Sushun and afterword in *Draft History of the Qing* was written in an interesting way. Did not Sushun propound 'demented and treasonable errors' in an imperial edict? Was he not criticised as a public enemy of the empire, executed and his body torn to pieces? According to the orthodox precedent of 'keep the king but lose the crown', the death sentence was carried out according to the law but he was treated far more harshly than other Manchu aristocrats or young members of the Eight Banners. According to his biographer his greatest error was to underestimate the capabilities of Prince Gong, who blocked the return of the Xianfeng emperor to Beijing which resulted in the prince being both envied and hated by the nobles and high officials of the capital. He supported Cixi's regency as a necessary but temporary measure. The Xianfeng emperor delayed his return to Beijing and refused a request from Prince Gong that he visit him in Rehe. Was this Sushun's idea? Writers give different explanations. After the death of Xianfeng, the family of the deceased emperor wanted Sushun and seven others to act as regents, thus excluding Prince Gong who had remained in Beijing to take charge of the government, and the state secret was divulged that they also wished to prevent Cixi from having any involvement in politics. This gave Cixi and Prince Gong motive for plotting against him. Sushun and other considered that although power went with the throne, they relied on secret plots and were unable to prevent others. The military power that Prince Gong had seized in Beijing was used to foment a sudden attack and they were suddenly arrested without putting up a fight.

History does not have 'supposings' or 'what ifs'. There is no way of guessing what Sushun and the others were thinking before this. With their authority as high officials they understood the need to gain an advantage by striking the first blow. If the 1861 coup had miscarried, the history of the late Qing after Xianfeng could have presented a very different picture. However Sushun was dead and his policies, especially his emphasis on 'using the Han to control the Han' were advanced by the throne and carried out by the Qing government with the 'prince regent', Prince Gong, at its head.

24 April 2009, at night.

ESSAY 63

Sheng Bao's Fall and Rise

The Empress Dowager Cixi began her 67 year rule of China with the coup against the regency in 1861. Her rule was unprecedented in the history of mediaeval China's long line of dynasties. She 'had the emperor in her power and ordered the nobles about in his name' and held audiences as if she were the emperor. This contradicted the entire premise of the Confucian attitude to rulers; the use of the appropriate imperial reign names covered up the fact that Cixi was the *de facto* monarch.

A story that spread widely during the late Qing period was that towards the end of his life the Xianfeng emperor was determined that Concubine Yi [the Empress Dowager] must not rule after his death and had secret discussions with Sushun as to whether they should emulate the story of the Han emperor Wudi, designating his son as heir but killing the mother, a story that is repeated in a number of historical and literary sources, but these appear to be rumours to fill a lack of information. In a testamentary edict Xianfeng appointed Sushun and seven others to act as regents on his death and this was obviously modelled on Huo Guang and two other regents similarly appointed by Han Wudi. It was also said that as Xianfeng was on the point of death he sent a secret edit to the Empress Dowager of the Niohuru clan [Ci'an], to the effect that 'if this person caused trouble, she should be dealt with according to the ancestral laws'. Before the death of the emperor, although Cixi had borne him a son she was not promoted from the Bordered Blue Banner to the Bordered Yellow Banner, and in the testamentary edict there was no mention of the question of her future status. Her banner status was raised after the emperor's death and the proclamation of the new reign period of Tongzhi.

The 1861 coup against the regents has been covered extensively by historians inside China and abroad. Although interpretations differ, there are relatively few variations in their accounts of the course of the coup. The coup was instigated by Cixi in contravention of the provisions laid down by the Xianfeng emperor for the succession and she ruled from 'behind the screen', and was clearly in breach of the ancestral laws of the Manchu Aisin Gioro clan. The coup was engineered by Cixi, Ci'an and Prince Gong in concert and it would have been impossible if they had not had the military force of the Manchu banners behind them. Who were their military supporters? Three senior military officers were involved, the Mongol prince Senggerinchin, the Manchu official Duanlin and Shengbao.

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These three were all defeated generals in the September 1860 occupation of Beijing by British and French forces. When Xianfeng heard that they had been defeated at Baliqiao, he fled north with his entourage to Rehe (see the previous chapter on the burning of the Old Summer Palace). He arrived at the Chengde palace badly shaken where he received news about the looting of the Old Summer Palace and the opening of the gates of Beijing to allow the robbers to enter. He was furious at Senggerinchin and Duanlin and issued an edict ordering that they be removed from all their official positions. Two people were responsible for raising the emperor's ire against them—Prince Gong and Shengbao (for which see *Chouban Yiwu shimo*). A folded letter from Shengbao and Xianfeng's vermillion rescript are particularly interesting.

According to the biography in the *Qingshigao*, Shengbao was a Manchu of the Bordered White Banner, who passed the examination for *juren* in 1840 (Daoguang 20) and served as an official in Beijing for over ten years when he was suddenly assigned to a 'plan for dealing with the rebels', effectively transferring from a civil to a military role; he was sent to the front line to do battle with the Taiping and Nian armies, rapidly become in an Imperial Military Commissioner in Hebei. He was proud and complacent and on the two sides of his seal were written the words, 'fifteen in the outer court of the temple, twenty in the Hanlin academy, thirty great generals' and 'I always overcome in war'. Unfortunately he did not usually overcome in war and in 1860 (Xianfeng 10) he surrendered at the Guanglu Temple and was transferred to the post of chief Manchu official managing state banquets. As he returned to Beijing the British and French forces were attacking Tongzhou, so by imperial decree he was appointed commander of the Imperial Guards of the Manchu banners, under the command of Senggelinchin.

Before the battle of Baliqiao, the Xianfeng emperor had dispatched Zaiyuan to negotiate with the British and French forces. When these broke down Senggerinchin's troops took thirty nine men hostage including Harry Parkes. Sheng Bao immediately displayed noble loyalty and righteousness and personally killed two of the hostages with his sword. In later fighting he was injured by enemy artillery and used his wounds as capital to demonstrate his loyalty to the emperor. He took sick leave for two weeks and then continued to lead the guard units against the attacks by the British and French forces but never achieved a military reputation to match Senggerinchin or Duanlin. He discussed with Prince Gong and others strategies for 'pushing back the foreigners', acknowledging that eventually there would have to be peace negotiations. A memorial to the throne from Prince Gong only condemned Senggerinchin and Dailin for their failures in the sacking of the city and burning of the Old Summer Palace and at the same time acknowledged Shengbao's worth. This

implies that the emperor approved of Sheng Bao's 'high level of dedication to the service of his country' and gave him command of the remnants of the Manchu imperial guard units and reinforcements from the provinces.

Shengbao was not of course satisfied and continued to submit boastful and misleading memorials saying that if he had more troops he could go on fighting against the Western forces. The Xianfeng emperor replied in an edict, acknowledging his loyalty and fighting spirit but indicating that he would have to be patient but that further reinforcements should be assigned to him rather than to the units under the command of Senggelinchin and Dailin.

Unfortunately Shengbao was only able to deploy the resources assigned to him as Imperial Commissioner for ten days before the Xianfeng emperor ratified the Treaties of Beijing between the British and French and the Qing government. Shengbao turned his hand to proposals for retraining the Beijing garrison which naturally moved the emperor who put him in charge of the banner forces at the Old Summer Palace and the bondservants of the Imperial Household. He thus became the head of the bodyguard for the imperial family. In this position he was able to strengthen his old ties to Prince Gong and create new connections with the younger brother of Cixi, Guixiang (see Fei Xingjian *Biography of Cixi*). It is possible that Xianfeng was aware of what was happening as the following year he sent Shengbao to Shandong to 'wipe out the Nian rebels'. Although he had honoured him with the position of Imperial Commissioner he had forced him to part with five thousand troops whuch were transferred to Senggelinchin (see *Qingshigao*) and did not change his status as candidate for the Vice-Presidency of a Board. Shengbao clung to the power that was associated with commanding the imperial bodyguard and after Xianfeng's death in exile in Rehe he swiftly expressed his support for the regency of two empress dowagers, citing the precedent of the Empress Wu in the Han dynasty and indicated that he wanted to lead the imperial bodyguard to Rehe. Sushun and the other seven regents were alarmed at this suggestion but were unable to prevent him from going to the palace at Rehe to mourn the death of the emperor. When Shengbao arrived in Rehe, rather than pay respects to the two empress dowagers as had been arranged, he took the opportunity to plot against the palace officials to try to secure his own position.

Some writer argue that Shengbao had withdrawn from the power struggle and that this had an unexpected effect on Sushun and others, causing Cixi and Prince Gong to plot to get him back to Beijing and break up the power of the eight regents. A plan to detain them individually was soon realised and Shengbao appears to have played a part in this. In any case after the coup had been successful he was formally appointed as Manchu Senior Vice President of the Board of War, but only a year after he took office the power that he derived

from his control over the Imperial Bodyguard was stripped from him and he was transferred to the Manchu Bordered Yellow Banner as a Lieutenant-General and then sent to Anhui to 'wipe out the rebels' there (see the *Qingshigao*).

In dealing with the Taiping and the Nian rebels Shengbao had only one technique; this was to offer official posts and make lavish promises, including promising rebel leaders that he would not break up their original units but would distinguish between official troops and 'bandits' with different flags uniforms. This technique was employed throughout a number of provinces although some units eventually reverted to their original forms. The outcome was that there were more and more Nian bandits and local unrest continued.

Shengbao was like an official bandit himself and was eventually stripped of all his official posts but when he was detained he compared himself with Nian Gengyao of the Yongzheng period and argued that the Cixi regency depended completely on his support. This inevitably exposed the shameful history of Cixi's collusion with military chiefs to stage a coup and become the nation's model mother. Shengbao had to die, and in July 1863 Cixi arranged for a committee of senior officials to agree to his execution.

20 January 2009, in the early hours of the morning.

ESSAY 64

To the End of the Xianfeng Reign

Qing historians in the last half century have followed the official line that 'ethnic conflict was class conflict' and dare not face up to the fact of conflict between Manchu and Han throughout the entire Qing dynasty. In official publications the terms 'Manchu' and even 'Manchu Qing' were both taboos.

In fact there was the fundamental and the superficial: at bottom, ethnic conflict was a historical reality and those who reject the idea have simply not considered the fundamentals. Because this word and the 'highest directives' clearly indicate the historical fact that there were many serious clashes between the Manchu and the Han, if it is avoided or denied it will lead to a biased approach that is certainly not seeking truth from facts.

This is not the place to go into detail about the origins of the term Manchu (for which see *Zouchu zhongshiji* volume 2, Fudan University Press, 2008), but in the chapter on Sushun it is clear that the ideas of the seven generations of emperors since the Manchus entered the passes and the boundary between Manchu and Han were constantly in the minds of the Manchu elite and the bannermen more generally.

A few years ago, using the massive edition of the *Qingshi* compiled by many officials, I was wondering whether it was superior to the *Qingshigao* published at the beginning of the Republic. Not having seen the detailed announcement of the 'State Committee on the Compilation of Qing History' it is difficult to judge, but considering the question of 'the prosperity of Kangxi and Qianlong', I wonder whether in future the reign of Yongzheng which was squeezed between the two will still be excluded from the 'heyday' of the Qing.

Readers with some knowledge of Qing history will all be aware that Shizong was on the throne as the Yongzheng emperor for almost thirteen years, and although this was not as long as the reigns of his father, Shengzong, or his son, Gaozong, he was the link that connected the other two. Even if only the period around his accession to the throne is considered, on the one hand he slaughtered his brothers and put in order the Manchu and Han banner elites; on the other he broke the ancestral system and created the Grand Council to replace the Grand Secretariat. By means of a perfect system of secret communications, he created an unprecedented personal intelligence network, while at the same time converting a corrupt bureaucracy into a 'system of legalised corruption' (to borrow an unorthodox Qing term), indicating that he was the real creator of the 'heyday' of the Qing dynasty in the 18th century. This is the historical

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recollection of the period of over a hundred years from the Qianlong reign right through to the collapse of the dynasty. I do not understand why previous Qing historians have excluded the Yongzheng reign from the 'heyday' of the dynasty.

Returning to the policies of the Xianfeng reign to deal with the threats to the empire, faced with the danger of popular uprisings in the south spreading to Hebei, Beijing and Tianjin, there was a decision to ignore the boundaries between Manchu and Han and employ people simply on the basis of their abilities, a strategy proposed by the senior Manchu official, Wenqing, who was knowledgeable about the history of the Qing dynasty from its inception, and strongly supported by the favourite courtier, Sushun. Zeng Guofan, Hu Linyi, Zuo Zongtang and other leaders of the Hunan military and Li Hongzhang who a little later created the Huai army appeared on the stage of later Qing military and political affairs because of this strategy, all of which was very logical.

In the second century BC, Sima Qian analysed the process by which the emperor Qinshi huangdi absorbed six smaller states and observed that it had changed China entirely. This was evaluated as a rational process in the Han period but later generations viewed it as a process of 'winner takes all'. If Sushun, after the death of Wenqing, had not stuck firmly to the Hunan army of Zeng and Hu, if he had not strongly defended Zuo Zongtang's loyalty at the Qing court, then after the Xianfeng emperor had been forced out of Beijing by the British and French armies, whether the end result still have been the collapse of the Qing empire is difficult to say. It is clear that, although the Manchu empire was tottering after the Xianfeng emperor fell ill and died as a result of his dissolute life, it continued for another half a century.

Can it be that Sushun and the others in the Qing court had not come across such adversaries? The adversaries were powerful and highly placed. It is very strange that Zeng Guofan and the other southern gentry who had opposed the emperor's military force in suppressing the Taiping were actually officials on whom he relied heavily. Previously it has been shown that when the Xianfeng emperor learned that Zeng Guofan's land and water troops attack the Taiping army occupying Wuhan, he was overjoyed. It was a Han officials who woke the emperor up with cold water on his head and made him aware that it was Han commoner officials (including Zeng Guofan who was registered as a commoner when he was off the official register following the death of his father) who responded to the call and whose status was not different to that of their adversary Hong Xiuquan. This person was Qi Juncao, a Han official of the Grand Council who came from Shouyang in Shanxi. Later it was another Han official Zhou Zupei and others who opposed Sushun and were implicated in his death. It can be seen that Sushun often cursed 'our idiot bannermen' but

that was not the only problem. All of those who emerged to attack Sushun, Daiyuan and Duanhua, the 'three traitors', were Han officials but in the end the problem was not really ethnic conflict or class struggle but a power struggle.

Peony Pavillion (*Mudan ting*), which was written by Tang Xianzu in the Ming dynasty, describes 'ten thousand *li* of rivers and mountains and ten thousand *li* of dust, every new son of heaven brings his own courtiers', an axiom certainly adhered to in successive reigns of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Xianfeng emperor died in the high summer of 1861, but before his death he had appointed eight senior Manchu and Han officials, including Zaiyuan, Duanhua and Sushun, to act as regents during the new reign of the six year old Tongzhi emperor. Sushun and his colleagues realised too late that a relict concubine of the late emperor, the mother of the Tongzhi emperor, was hatching a palace coup d'etat under their noses with the Empress Dowager of the Xianfeng Emperor and the emperor's son Prince Gong.

In terms of actual strength, Sushun and the others were in a superior position inside and outside the palace. However the final outcome of the coup was the victory of the inferior over the superior. Sushun was executed, the Princes Yi and Zheng were forced to commit suicide and the political situation in the palace was reversed. The Qing dynasty entered a period of forty seven years with a female autocrat.

3 June, 2008 at night.

PART 7

Problems of Political Reform

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ESSAY 65

Learn from the Barbarians or Control the Barbarians?

From 1842, after British warships opened up the gates to the Manchu empire, the Chinese people wavered between the two approaches of 'learning from the barbarians' or 'controlling the barbarians'.

Initially, according to Lin Zexu's strategy of 'learning from the superior technology of the barbarians to control them', 'learning' was the technique and 'controlling the objective', so what the empire wished to study was the firepower of the battleships used by the British enemy. Lin advocated this throughout his career but it was demonstrably insufficient to contend with the British Navy, let alone to 'control the barbarians'.

Was the series of Qing defeats due solely to the fact that their technology was inferior to that of the British? Lin felt that it was not as simple as that. In his writings after he had been removed from office by the Daoguang emperor, he constantly referred to his dissatisfaction with the attitude and actions of the emperor: some scholars have suggested that he was thinking in terms of a 'trade war'. Even more clearly, after the Opium War, writers were rethinking the reasons for China's defeat and had begun to move towards the idea of 'learning from the barbarians'. For example the Guangdong provincial graduate Liang Tingnan, who supported Lin Zexu, drew attention to the dissimilarities between the British system and the 'United States' of America. The Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang, Xu Jiyu, who had permitted medical missionaries to practice in Fujian and in his old age was driven out by a mob led by Lin Zexu, in his book *Ying huan zhi lǘe* (*A Short Account of the Maritime Circuit*) was the first to introduce Napoleon, Washington and the British bicameral system [of Parliament] to Chinese readers. Their field of vision was wider than just the level of technology and dealt with the 'way' in which these states had been established.

For those who supported the line of 'learning from the barbarians' in the late Qing period, the theoretical guide was not the *Haiguo tuzhi*, but *Protest from the Jiaobin Studio* (*Jiaobinlu kangyi*). Its author, Feng Guifen, was a student of Lin Zexu's who all his life loathed Wei Yuan, who he suspected of having been involved in plagiarising from Lin Zexu's 'three plans for sea defences'. After the attack on the imperial capital by the British and French and the destruction by the Taiping of the cultural centre of the empire, he began to have doubts

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about his teacher's objective of 'controlling the barbarians'. When the Taipings occupied Suzhou, Feng Guifen fled to the foreign concession in Shanghai. On the one hand he urged Zeng Guofan to cooperate with the concession authorities to resist [the Taiping commander] Li Xiucheng, thus becoming one of the instigators of the Huai Army set up by Li Hongzhang and based in Shanghai to suppress the Taiping forces. At the same time he acquired new knowledge in Shanghai about the situation in Britain and the United States, and wrote *Protest* in forty chapters with two appendices. This book was highly praised by Zhang Zhidong as the origin of the model of 'Chinese for substance and Western for application'. However Feng Guifen was more interested in techniques by which states had become wealthy and strong and the measures that the Chinese empire needed to take to eliminate maladministration.

Precisely because Feng Guifen's *Protest* emphasised the possibility of 'learning from the barbarians', it was not published until after his death, when it was called by Li Hongzhang the 'essentials of foreign affairs'. Twenty four years after Feng Guifen's death, in the 1898 reform movement under the Guangxu emperor, this old book was reprinted and issued to various government departments with instructions that they comment on the ideas in it and these were apparently placed in the archives but it is unlikely that historians will be able to study them.

I approve of this explanation, since history is a constant process of the interchange of relationships. That is to say that 'learning from the advanced technology of the barbarians in order to control them' was an objective of Lin Zexu and not a technique. Feng Guifen drew attention to the practical significance of the techniques, which led to the Hundred Days Reforms of 1898: the Hundred Days Reforms were killed off by the Manchu bannermen with Cixi at their head. However the support of the Cixi clique for the Boxers brought about the invasion of the allied armies of eight nations and the occupation of Beijing and the Boxer Protocol indicated that although the empire was there in name, in reality it had perished. After this, in spite of the fact that at the end of the Qing there was a fake constitution and although the Wuchang uprising signed the death warrant for the Manchu Qing dynasty, in spite of the disintegration and civil war during the Republic, 'learning from the barbarians' was the main social and political aim throughout the entire first half of the twentieth century.

Sun Yat-sen in his *Plans for National Reconstruction* (*Jianguo dagang*) proposed that China could be 'transformed into America' by means of 'three stages of revolution', military administration, political tutelage and constitutional government. However his successor Chiang Kaishek had not completed the 'political tutelage' by 1927 and it was not until the eve of his departure from

the mainland that he convened a National Assembly and proclaimed a 'constitutional government'.

Before the establishment of the Republic, the *White Book* criticising America written by Mao Zedong called on the Chinese people to eliminate the slave philosophies of fearing America, being close to America and currying favour with America; at a higher level this was reliving Lin Zexu's theory of 'controlling barbarians' and was the psychological force behind the war to resist America [and aid Korea]. However from 'leaning to one side' at that time, in the process of construction and 'overall Sovietisation', the cultural essence was lost and opposition to 'learning from the barbarians' moved from western Europe to the Soviet Union, the main reason for the dissatisfaction expressed by the so-called rightists in 1957.

According to the Japanese authors of the *History of Modern Chinese Philosophy*, the debate on 'learning from the barbarians' and 'controlling the barbarians' remained a major topic in the intellectual world of New China but whether this is the case or not awaits further research.

28 November 2007, first drafted at night.

ESSAY 66

Feng Guifen's Protest from the Jiaobin Studio

In 1801 (Jiaqing 6) the young Bao Shichen from southern Anhui wrote *On Wealth* (*Shuochu*) which, in the opinion of Liu Guangjing in the *Cambridge History of China*, marked the beginning of ideas of political reform in the late Qing. The talented scholar from Hangzhou, Gong Zizhen (1792–1841) was 21 years old in 1812 (Jiaqing 17) and was serving in the office of a magistrate in Anhui when he first made the acquaintance of *On Wealth*. Gong Zizhen in his later years had a good relationship with Bao, according to his biographer, and Gong had criticised the corruption in the official world that was based on an autocratic system in a book *Mingliang lun* written when he was twenty-three and in later writings expressed the view that if the empire did not undertake 'self-reform' it would suffer the same fate as the Qin and Han dynasties and be replaced by another ruling house. It is not clear whether he was influenced by Bao Shichen, but some of his ideas on reform are similar to those expressed in *On Wealth*.

Gong Zizhen became violently ill in 1841 (Daoguang 21) and relinquished his official post. Bao Shichen lived for another 40 years. The second volume of *On Wealth* had been published in 1825 and this included the sections on plans for reform of river management, salt administration and grain transport. In his later years collections of his writings were published but he never dared publish the first volume of *On Wealth*. The writings of Gong Zizhen, however, who had died young and in his prime, were revised by Wei Yuan and disseminated in a different form. For that reason Gong is often credited as the originator of the idea of 'self-reform' in the late Qing.

Gong Zizhen died the year after the outbreak of the Opium War, but two years previously he had written warmly supporting Lin Zexu's mission to Guangdong to suppress the opium trade but was half-hearted in his support for Lin's return to the Board of Rites and rejected the idea of going to Guangdong. He appears to have lost hope in any positive solution to the naval conflict with Britain but it is difficult to say whether at that point he took the view that the crisis in the empire was primarily internal or external. In his youth Gong has certainly been critical of the Qing court's insistence on the ancestral system and the danger this posed of popular revolt, and only ten years after his death, far on the southern frontiers, a revolt broke out among miners and peasants associated with the God Worshippers' Society that became known

as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, virtually overturning the south of the state. Because of the Qing court's stupidity, at the height of the Taiping rebellion, they gave the British and French forces a pretext for invading northern China. In the later Qing, bedevilled as it was by sorcery and superstition, Gong Zizhen was clearly a man of foresight.

Feng Guifen, from Suzhou was a follower of Lin Zexu. In the year that the Opium War broke out Feng graduated with high honours in his *jinshi* examination and became a compiler in the Hanlin Academy. His father and mother died and Nanjing was taken over by the Taiping rebels and he was active in the organisation of a military [to defend Suzhou]. This earned him promotion to the fifth grade and he became Assistant Secretary to the Heir Apparent. When the Taipings attacked Suzhou, he escaped to the foreign concession in Shanghai where he was in touch with people from various countries in the political and commercial worlds and this changed his political outlook. He began to plan how the strength of the foreigners could be organised for local defence and wrote to Zeng Guofan to persuade him to send Li Hongzhang to enlist men to defend Shanghai. This put Li Xiucheng on the defensive and the Huai army used foreign arms and troops to occupy Suzhou and Songjiang and other prefectures. Feng Guifen was transformed into the the premier theorist of 'foreign matters' in the late Qing period.

Protest was a collection of Feng's writings on 'foreign matters', and in his preface, written in October 1861, Feng declared that the end of the preface revealed his true purpose. At the beginning of that month the Empress Dowager, Cixi, and Prince Gong had launched the coup against the regency, the government was changed and the reign name of Tongzhi was adopted. Although they had appointed Zeng Guofan to command the armies of four provinces, officials below governor and Governor-General were being checked; this was equivalent to handing over the military power of the south east to the Han officials and gentry of the Hunan and Huai armies, nearly two hundred years after the death of Hong Chengchou, the first Han official to be given such an important post in the south. Feng saw the opportunities for reform offered by the transfer of power into the hands of the Han and offered his services to Zeng Guofan.

Zeng organised the Hunan army, including its recruiting and requisitioning entirely himself, clearly flouting the prohibition in the Manchu ancestral code on any Han Chinese having military command. During the conflict he came more and more to depend on foreign equipment and men to win victory in the civil war [with the Taipings]. He, Zuo Zongtang, Li Hongzhang and others thought and acted together, breaking all the rules, and just like the 'false Confucians' denounced by the long line of Qing emperors gave considerable

cause for the conservative Manchu elite to gossip and try to rake up misdeeds in their pasts and Feng's *Protest* was a defence against the attacks on Zeng, Zuo and Li.

The preface to *Protest* explains Feng's policies. Firstly he sang the praises of 'the ways of sages of three generations' using the ancients to attack the present, criticising mediocre Confucian scholars and their empty talk, and later attacking modern Confucians for failing to live up to the highest standards. However he also stressed the differences between ancient and modern times and the modern need for different methods. It was not possible to replicate the ancient in everything. This was a restatement of points that had already been made by Bao Shichen and Gong Zizhen, but Feng Guifen went further, suggesting that it was also possible to 'use barbarians to control Chinese'.

Of course before the forty chapters and two appendices of *Protest* had been drafted, British and French forces had stormed into north China and forced the Qing government to sign a new round of unequal treaties, so the surprise and resentment expressed by Feng Guifen at 'the greatest and most extensive nation on earth coming under the control of minor barbarians' is understandable. He detested Wei Yuan for his plagiarism of Lin Zexu's original manuscript and condemned his policy of 'using barbarians to control the barbarians and fund barbarians' as unworkable and 'wished to regard all barbarians as combatants' but also acknowledged the rationale behind 'studying the superior technology of the barbarians to control the barbarians'. The Manchus, when they went from rebelling against the Ming to replacing the Ming, were in fact 'studying the superior technology of the Ming in order to control the Ming'. *Protest* indicated that the 'adoption of Western learning' in the late Ming period was effective but avoided mentioning that the Ming regarded the Manchus as barbarians and argued that the dispute between the barbarians and the Chinese in those days was different from the contemporary conflict between China or the Chinese and Britain, France, America, Russia and other nations.

It is therefore clear that, for Feng Guifen and his contemporaries, 'studying the superior technology of the barbarians' acknowledged the possibility of 'using the barbarians to change the Chinese', and that this was the origin of the later concept of 'learning from the West'.

Protest therefore became a key public order text for the leaders of the Hunan and Huai armies who were in the ascendant in south China. Time and again it set out in some detail that, 'for the state today dealing with the barbarians is the top priority', and described how in various different ways, economically, in the relations between ruler and ruled, but in particular in military technology, the barbarians were superior to the Chinese.

In *Protest*, Feng Guifen repeatedly points out that China had been ahead of many of the 'barbarians' that had emerged late and at the time also had many excellent people who wished to understand how to stand on one's own feet and strengthen the country to regain its former glory. His judgment was that, 'China's feudal hierarchy and the Confucian ethnical code were at the root of the problem', and that 'it is necessary to proceed from the barbarians but move to defeating the barbarians'. Feng called this 'contemporary China's principal task', demonstrating that he had addressed the key issues, but it had already been raised by Zeng Guofan in his writings on the suppression of rebels in Guangdong. The attack by the Taipings on the 'feudal hierarchy and Confucian code' raised question of how social order could be reconstructed.

Feng also constantly opposed the strategy of the Qing court of 'using the Manchus to control the Han' before the war, and he was even more opposed to the way the Manchu elite exploited the wealth and taxation of Jiangnan, the productive region south of the Yangzi. The disorder was on the point of being resolved and the old and great families of that region were in a position to restore the old system of 'renting out land to produce for themselves', with the support of the traditional Confucian code. But that did not resolve the problem of distribution of rent and taxes between the elite families of Jiangnan and the Qing court. The wealthy had to transfer the burden of heavy taxes onto the poor and this in the end led to pauperisation and banditry. *Protest* maintained that reconstruction of 'the fundamentals of hierarchy and the Confucian code', often reiterating the substance of the early Qing writer Gu Yanwu's point about 'the weight of taxation in the two prefectures of Suzhou and Songjiang', and demanding that the Qing court reduce rents, pointing out that after the suppression of the insurrection the number of vagrants, starving people and prostitutes and similar had multiplied, a stereotype of impoverishment. Feng Guifen wrote that 'the methods used should be condemned if they were bad and if the methods were good, even though they might be from barbarous countries, they should be studied'. These phrases, which some historians have regarded as startling are familiar in the history of institutional reform, whether ancient or modern, but it also pointed to the errors prevalent in the Xianfeng court. In reality, the 'way of the barbarians' espoused by Feng Guifen in this book referred to reforms such as poor relief and education in Holland and Sweden, and he acknowledged that China had long had such institutions. As for structural reform, what he advocated was limited to the superficial. Zhang Taiyan [Zhang Bingling] at the end of the Qing dynasty criticised him for praising 'official scholars' for his advocacy of tax reduction but not rent reduction and thus not addressing the fundamental problem.

The first section of *Protest* was to have come from Zeng Guofan. Although he was slow and reluctant to provide a preface to the book he did not prevent people from making private copies of his writings and finally confirmed, in the form of a reply to a letter, that they could be taken as a model [for a preface]. Following it was Li Hongzhang's commendation of the work as 'essential reading in foreign matters'. When the war between the Qing and the French broke out, Zhang Zhidong, the leading foreign affairs specialist at the end of the Qing period, first used the phrase 'Chinese for the fundamental and Western for the practical'. During the Hundred Days reform movement when the Kang Youwei group in a great hurry failed in their plan to 'settle matters of national importance', the Guangxu emperor, who found himself riding a tiger from which he was unable to dismount, asked Ronglu to arrange for the reprinting of a thousand copies of *Protest*, which had been first published forty years previously, and issue them to the offices of senior ministers in the imperial government to assess its feasibility in getting him out of an impossible situation. The reforms were strangled in a coup by the Empress Dowager but the archives exist to this day even though they have not been well researched.

28 March 2009, in the early hours of the morning.

ESSAY 67

The Grand Council in the Late Qing Period

The Grand Council, which was established in the Yongzheng reign of the Qing dynasty, played a pivotal and powerful role under eight emperors until it was abolished on the eve of the 1911 Revolution [*Xinhai geming*].

Strangely enough, officially compiled political histories from the middle of the Qing onwards, such as the Qianlong period edition of the *Da Qing huidian* hardly mention the Grand Council. In the revision of this encyclopaedic collection of statutes and precedents, the responsibilities of the council are mentioned briefly. Anyone who requires more detail has no choice other than to go to the unofficial histories and *biji* notebooks or commonplace books written during the Qing, for example Zhao Yi's *Yanpu zaji* in the Qianlong reign and *Shuyuan zaji*, written by Liang Zhangju in the Daoguang period. They were both secretaries attached to the Grand Council and both paid attention to the power structures of the council and provided different perspective on what they observed and heard in the council, while praising the sagacity of the ruling emperor of their times. Therefore if someone like Zhao Yi wished to expose the true face of the historians of the Twenty Two Histories, and describe the vicissitudes and changing authority of the Grand Council, he may have been distorting the facts or at least digressing.

Of course ten years after the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the *Qingshigao*, compiled under the auspices of the Northern Warlords government during the Republic did include material on the Grand Council in chapters and tables on the responsibilities of officials, but reading them is disappointing; they are historically misleading as they avoid the issue of the evolution of powers embodied in the Manchu Qing Grand Council. They are also misleading on ethnicity including the fact that the council exemplified the discrimination in the policy of 'using Manchus to control the Han'. What is not misleading is that the Grand Council was a political tool through which the Qing emperors implemented deference to the monarch and oppression of the populace—the historical inevitability of the present triumphing over the past.

Because space is limited one example from the foreword to the table of Grand Council officials in the *Qing shigao* will have to suffice. It points out that, 'the Grand Council did not follow past precedents and its officials deal with important matters of state. Initially it concerned itself only with imperial policy and military matters but this broadened and in the eighty years since

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the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods, it was the Grand Council rather than the Grand Secretariat that dealt with crises and was the effective ruling body'.

This is written in only 65 characters without punctuation, but it crystallised three major historical errors. The first is that the Qing followed Ming precedent of the establishment of the Grand Secretariat, but for the Manchu Qing, before and after they entered the passes in 1644, the highest policy making body was the council of the Manchu Banner princes and ministers; the political function of the three councils [*yuan*] which were the predecessors of the Grand Secretariat was merely consultative. The second error is that as late as the time when the Kangxi emperor began to rule in his own right, the policy making bodies had shifted to the Southern Study, which included Han Chinese officials such as Gao Shiqi and Xu Qianxue and powerful Manchus including Songgotu and Mingzhu who had become trusted by Kangxi through the 'silken thread payments'. The third error was that the struggle over the succession which unfolded over a period of years in the middle of the Kangxi reign undoubtedly complicated the individual psychology of the Kangxi emperor so that in his later years his decision making was unpredictable. People may not agree with the textual research of Meng Sen and Wang Zhonghan on whether the Yongzheng emperor usurped the throne, but on the basis of reverse logic, it cannot be denied that they exposed obvious inconsistencies in the historical narrative.

In any case the Yongzheng emperor was on the Dragon Throne for only thirteen years and in realising the autocratic monarchy he broke the the record of the mediaeval dynasties. For example he established an integrated system of confidential communications, which encouraged mutual monitoring of officials within and without the palace. After four thousand or so days on the throne, he had read and commented on more than 160,000 items, on average thirty a day; there is no comparison with the administrative burdens of Qin Shihuangdi or the Ming emperor Yongle. The drawback was that he became a slave of the confidential communications, such that his son and grandson were obliged to reform it so that the normal three character imperial comment of *zhidaole*, which can be translated as 'noted' or 'understood', was reduced to one character, *lan*, 'read'. His great-grandson, the Daoguang emperor, on the advice of his Senior Grand Secretary, Cao Zhenyong, who came from a wealthy family of salt merchants, simplified the system further by only picking memorials from statesmen and officers that were brief and not time consuming, but that does not compare with Lin Biao who used drawings and maps instead of secret documents. Another of Cao's innovations was of course the creation of the Grand Council.

History relates that the Grand Council was initially created by Yongzheng to deal with confidential military matters in connection with the defence of the western borders. That is a superficial version of what happened. From books such as Jiang Liangqi's *Records from within the Eastern Flowery Gate* (*Donghua lu*) and Xiaoshi's *Records of Yongxian* [*Yongxianlu*], it is clear that Yongzheng had two anxieties when he ascended the throne: one was that his brothers generally believed that he had falsified Kangxi's testament on the succession; the other was preventing the military chief, 'Uncle Longkodo', and Nian Gengyao from becoming threats to his rule. Yongzheng went from one approach to the other, plotting with various people, wiping out rivals from within the imperial family, 'suspecting and eradicating the loyal'; he imprisoned and sentenced to death both Longkeduo and Nian, and mourned the only prince who had supported him, Prince Yi who had died after becoming ill. At the same time he discovered that a rebellion had arisen in the mountain villages of Hunan, led by the teacher Zeng Jing who had denounced the emperor; it was foiled by the loyal official Yue Zhongqi who informed on Zeng to the emperor. It was this combination of factors that led Yongzheng to follow the example of his father Kangxi and turn the Southern Study into a personal advisory body, which in 1729 (Yongle 7) became the Office of Military Planning (*Junjifang*). It was staffed by young relatives and confidantes from among the Manchu and Han officials. Yongzheng had established personal control over the military and nominated as heir-apparent the future Qianlong emperor who understood the benefits of the military planning body or Grand Council and was unlikely to abandon his father's organization when he succeeded.

Therefore, over a period of almost 64 years, even when he had become Emperor Emeritus, Qianlong used the Grand Council to impose his dictatorial will. One effect of this was that in his later years, even with his favourite courtier Heshen who had been on the council for 23 years, the affairs of state and of the imperial family had become indistinguishable because of the role of bribery in political life.

In January 1799 (Jiaqing 4) the Emperor Emeritus died, his body was laid out in the Great Hall and the emperor, who for three years had been a puppet, suddenly made a move, had Heshen arrested and forced him to commit suicide. Needless to say he immediately replaced the Grand Council, initially following the example of his grandfather and appointing his younger brother Prince Cheng as the leading official, but after discovering that this young chap supported Hong Liangji's demand for the restoration of a more collaborative system of imperial rule, he was expelled from the Grand Council for 'condemning the ancestral system'.

It is unlikely that this was the only reason for the Jiaqing emperor's conservatism. At least as far as the Grand Council, the confidential core of the empire was concerned, in the twenty odd years that he ruled in his own right, Jiaqing made the following moves, or one could say, reforms: (1) maintaining a balance between Manchu and Han, approximately half and half in the officials of the Grand Council; (2) continuing with the policy of Manchus inside and Han outside so that the leading official in the Grand Council must be a bannerman, although in later years he appointed Dong Gao, a Han official who had served on the council for 40 years, as the Senior Grand Secretary, although he only regarded him only as a literary retainer; (3) strengthening the secret communications dictatorship and the private secretaries (*zhangjing*) attached to the Grand Council that had been established by Yongzheng. *Zhangjing* is a transliteration in to Chinese of a Manchu term and they would later simply be referred to as private secretaries. By the Jiaqing reign, this system of private secretaries had become established and there were sixteen of them, Manchu and Han, divided into groups but with the Han secretaries undertaking the drafting of important documents such as imperial edicts; their status was higher than the Manchu secretaries who were responsible for Manchu-Chinese translation of documents. For the hundred years from the Jiaqing reign to the collapse of the Qing, the process of changes in the historical function of the authority of Grand Council secretaries in the central Qing government is still discussed by Qing history scholars and awaits futher new historical materials.

The Grand Council, as the nucleus of power in the late Qing period, had in practice become a dictatorship of the private secretaries, and this is arguably the real face of the authority of the Grand Council at that time.

18 August 2008, at night.

ESSAY 68

Methods of Confucian Scholars during the Qing

By the 17th century, as the Manchus moved from revolting against the Ming to eradicating the Ming, there was effectively only one policy in their political culture—to transform the Ming dynasty's 'using the barbarians to control barbarians' into 'using the Han to control the Han', following the precedent of historical dynasties formed on the northern frontiers by tribes that had entered China. The principal difference was that the autocratic elite of the Manchus, afraid of losing their privileges as a conquering people were constantly vigilant against the danger of the sinicisation of the Manchu banners.

In writing on the cultural policies of the early Qing period, whether in China or abroad, although there is general agreement that the effect was to encourage cultural 'pluralism and integration', the 'integration' was largely towards the orthodoxy of Confucius and Mencius, shown clearly by the Qing emperor's veneration of the 'devices of the Confucian scholars', so that the Qianlong emperor could declare that, 'the fundamentals of governance are in Confucian orthodoxy'.

In fact the four reigns of the Qing dynasty—Shunzhi, Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong—adopted for nearly half a century the policy of 'using the Manchu to control the Han' to prevent the Manchus from being contaminated by Chinese customs. The direct effect was the general corrupting of the Manchu Eight Banners and the use by successive Manchu emperors of cultural separatism as state policy, duping the populace and duping themselves, so that cultures of the different ethnic groups and religions became further and further apart, which was not the intention of the emperors, but led finally to the appearance of pluralisation.

In view of the fact that Qing historians have to date paid little attention to the history of the names of the sage emperors, it is my contention that debating the reality of the names of the 'sages' from the angle of the history of the classics can assist in understanding the main trends of the political trickery of Confucian scholars in the Manchu Qing reigns. There is no need here to go over the ground covered in my 'Chinese Economy and Chinese Culture', *Fudan Journal*, 1986, No. 2.

Right up to the collapse of the Qing dynasty the Manchus never abandoned their superstitious beliefs in the sorcery of Shamanism. However, their religious policies, in line with those of the Jin and Yuan dynasties, was that when the conquered races submitted they would have to change to the calendar, the

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dress and the official system of the Manchus, but were permitted to maintain their original religious beliefs, such as the Mongol and Tibetan Lama Buddhism and the Islam of the various Muslim ethnic groups. However in terms of the earlier 'coexistence of the three religions', Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, there were also various secret society religions and Christianity from abroad which spread among the Han Chinese; it was difficult to concoct laws to deal with them. In the early days of the Qing the old Ming system was followed and the White Lotus and Buddhist and Daoist sects that flourished among the lower orders of the common people were all treated as the 'evil of treacherous people' and were constantly outlawed and suppressed. However in the late Ming the three types of Christianity that came into China were tolerated. The Vatican supported the anti-Protestant 'Matteo Ricci rules' which were considered to be interference in China's domestic affairs by the Kangxi emperor who banned the religions in anger and right through the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods they were considered to equivalent to 'heterodox sects'. During the latter part of the reign of Kangxi there was a move among the Han to bring back the 'veneration of Confucianism alone', reestablish the name of the sage and reinterpret the Confucian classics and to deify the ethics of the Neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi. His son, the Yongzheng emperor even went so far as to falsely accuse Lü Liuliang and other disciples of Zhu Xi of being 'Confucian code criminals', creating a cultural terror. His grandson, Qianlong, called even more for 'loyalty to the monarch and closeness to superiors' as the only criterion for judging the morality of officials and people of all ethnic groups. He paid particular attention to dividing the Han gentry, provoking scholarly antagonism, on the one hand using the most incompetent false Confucians to perfect his ideas, on the other hand stirring up 'scholarly mysteries', forcing genuinely able southern Chinese classical scholars into a narrow world of textual criticism. This Manchu Qing monarch did not expect that this group of classical scholars who appeared not to take any interest in politics would compete with each other in textual criticism and would dismantle the Four Books and Five Classics by imperial command, from the original text to the annotations and comments, leaving them in utter disorder, so that public opinion during the reign had difficulty in distinguishing the true from the false and whether they could continue to be used as texts for the imperial examinations. However Zhuang Cunyu, a man from Changzhou who acted as tutor to the son of the emperor, severely criticised this state of affairs, arguing that the basic attitude of using the Han to control the Han was destroying the Manchu empire and that there should be a return to the *status quo ante*.

After the middle of the 18th century, the Manchu government was fully aware that the imperial authorised classics contained fake Confucian texts purporting to be from the Wei and Jin to the Tang and Song dynasties but they

remained the standard texts for teaching and the examinations. Candidates across the entire country were obliged to read early texts including those of Zhu Xi that were either forged or with fake annotations. Anyone who did not would not succeed. This confusion of the genuine and the false is not just an indication of the the mainstream political culture of the Manchu Qing, it was an early entry into the cul de sac of 'there can be no major issues without lies'.

At the end of the 18th century the Qianlong emperor, who had appointed himself Emperor Emeritus, died. His designated successor the Jiaqing emperor had been on the throne for three years and could suddenly act in his own right, so he brought down the powerful courtier Heshen, alarming the officials and the populace of the entire country. The situation was very similar to that of the early Han dynasty as described in the book *On the Passing of the Qin Dynasty* (*Guoqinlun*) of Jia Yi who noted that the 'cries of pain throughout the kingdom give support to the new ruler'. However Jiaqing was focusing only on the power of the monarch and his natural disposition as a womaniser. He sentenced Heshen to death and had his property confiscated and without losing any time condemned the meddling of Manchu generals who were demanding a thorough investigation of Heshen's wealth. The rumour went round among the people that 'the fall of Heshen feeds Jiaqing', and the Hanlin Academician Hong Liangji who dared to expose this was imprisoned by the emperor and exiled to Xinjiang, a clear indication that the Qing court used corruption to oppose corruption; it was after all simply a power struggle between factions.

From 1799 when the Jiaqing emperor began to rule in his own right, he was content to follow the ancestral system and rejected any idea of reform; during his reign the young Zhejiang scholar Gong Zishen issued a warning that if the empire was not reformed he would commit suicide. By a sheer fluke the emperor fled the armed attack by Lin Qing and the millenarian Tianli Sect on the Imperial Palace in the Eight Trigrams rebellion and an attempted assassination by a cook named Chen. He did not realise his errors and repent, but announced himself as the Great Benefactor; the contemporary sage was inferior to his forefathers.

Jiaqing was the fifteenth son of Qianlong, his mother being a member of a Han Chinese banner, so he had both Chinese and Manchu blood. However he emphasised the fact that he was the descendant of the Emperor Emeritus and there was a taboo on officials or people suggesting that he was of mixed blood. He reigned in his own right for twenty-one years, caring especially that he was the legal descendant of the Manchu line of 'contemporary sages'. In reality he was keeping his feelings to himself about his liking for speaking about 'Confucian methods'.

29 November 2008, at night.

ESSAY 69

Record of the Difficult Birth of the Zongli Yamen

On 20 January 1861 (Xianfeng 10) the Xianfeng emperor, who was still in exile in Rehe, after discussions with senior officials at the palace there issued an edict establishing the Zongli Yamen [full title *Zongli ge guo tongshang shiwu yamen*, the Office for trade and relations with all nations] in Beijing, and appointed Prince Gong, Grand Secretary Guiliang and Wenxiang, Deputy Secretary of the Board of Revenue, to run it. This was an imperial rescript formally ratifying a request from Prince Gong the previous week. It made changes to the constitution of the proposed office, notably emphasising trade to its remit where originally it was to deal with all foreign relations and therefore changing its name as above. The intention was that its responsibilities were to be limited to commercial relations. The characters *guanfang* on the official seal, which had previously been used for government and military orders, indicated that the establishment of the Zongli Yamen would be a temporary measure and that it could be dissolved at some time in the future.

Originally Prince Gong was not au fait with 'barbarian affairs' but had been obliged to remain in Beijing to carry out peace negotiations after the emperor's flight to Rehe. Together with his father-in-law Guiliang and Wenxiang who had served for many years in the Grand Council he had to make the transition from fearing foreigners to understanding them and was aware of the superficially threatening but cowardly approach to foreigners adopted by his brother the Xianfeng emperor. After concluding Treaties of Beijing with Britain, France and Russia they felt that there was a desperate need for the Qing court to deal with the confusion of 'barbarian affairs' in a systematic way. Foreign relations were handled differently by different government departments and by local governors and circuit intendants; there were no rules and as a result minor difficulties frequently escalated into crises. It is not clear whether in the process of negotiating with the British, French and Russians they were aware that they were establishing a new office that would set the direction of China's relations with foreigners for posterity. However from the constitution that they drafted they clearly realised that China's system of dealing with foreign affairs needed to emerge from the mediaeval tradition and adapt to the contemporary rreality of international relations.

Of course Prince Gong and his colleges understood the traditional mechanisms of power, especially since he had been the leading official in the Grand Council at the beginning of the Xianfeng reign and was then soon dismissed

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by the emperor for being too able and forced to return to his studies. He was brought back because of the chaotic situation and discussed peace terms with the British, French and Russians. After this new round of humiliating Treaties of Beijing had been signed, the British and French troops withdrew from Beijing. Therefore there was general praise for Prince Gong among officials, gentry and the populace in general for outmanouevering the enemy by superior diplomacy and he took this opportunity, together with Guiliang and Wenxiang to propose the establishment of a new specialist office for foreign affairs, referring to a joint memorial sent to the emperor in 1860 and to events since the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 and the fact that the use of force had been the main approach to dealing with foreigners. They asked the emperor to recognise that the new foreigners they were dealing with were different, as had been shown by the defeat of Senggerinchin and others in 1860 and the occupation of the capital by foreign troops. After the signing of the various Treaties of Beijing in October 1860, the foreigners had withdrawn to Beijing and then sailed south. They did not bring any benefit to China but would have to be dealt with in a different way from in previous dynasties.

The words 'in previous dynasties' are not irrelevant. In 1644 when Wu Sangui allowed the Manchus to enter China and defeat Li Zicheng's rebel army, the Manchus were able to use the former Ming capital as the base for their conquest of China. Two hundred and sixty years later the occupation of Beijing by British and French troops did not follow this pattern as they did not try to establish their own capital in Beijing but relied on treaties and withdrew to their own countries, so it is hardly surprising that it astonished this group of senior Manchu nobles and officials who could not interpret the actions of the foreigners. It was perhaps Wenxiang, rather than Prince Gong, who first began to comprehend that the foreigners were playing by a set of rules that were rather different from those that the conservative Manchus had been used to. They therefore considered imitating them, or at least fooling themselves and others that these more distant barbarians 'acted in good faith and could be won over and domesticated'.

As soon as the Xianfeng emperor heard about the 'barbarians' he fled, even feeling insecure in Rehe and considering moving further inland to Xi'an. After Prince Gong had concluded the signing of the Treaties of Beijing, the emperor came up with numerous excuses for not returning to the capital. This is understandable but what was strange was that he still considered that he had the authority to force the government that had remained in Beijing to submit to him. He was in fact unable to obstruct the proposal by Prince Gong and the others to set up the Zongli Yamen but still tried to restrict its activities to trade and treated it as a temporary institution.

Prince Gong and his colleagues foresaw that the government in exile would issue such an edict and added several appendices to the constitution for the Zongli Yamen that they had previously proposed. One of these was that a commercial office under the Zongli Yamen should be established in Tianjin. The intention of this was to comply with the emperor's wishes to deal with the foreigners on a commercial level and save the emperor's face, while permitting the Zongli Yamen to handle foreign relations in a more general way.

What is more, Prince Gong and his colleagues invited the British envoy Thomas Wade to 'come to Beijing to have preliminary discussions'. This was really because they were afraid that the British forces based in Tianjin would not abide by the conditions of the treaties. The establishment of the Zongli Yamen in Beijing, after Shanghai and Guangdong had been rejected as alternatives, allowed the possibility of direct negotiation with the government; this was what the British had wanted and the emperor was not in a position to refuse to ratify it.

The emperor did ratify the request but still hoped to limit the powers of the yamen to commercial matters and oblige it to exist as a temporary institution. Prince Gong and the other officials could not concede this and on 26 January of that year, Prince Gong and Wenxiang sent another memorial in response to the imperial vermillion rescript of 20 January, arguing that the foreigners were not just interested in commerce and should be dealt with as official representatives. Only a strong Zongli Yamen would be able to manage this problem and it should not be restricted by the word 'commerce' in its constitution.

This appeared to be an impasse. Prince Gong and his officials naturally needed to preserve the status of the emperor and an edict could not be altered. There were only two options open to them: one was to notify the 'barbarian chieftains' of the new remit of the organisation; the other was to notify the Board of Rites and ask for the word 'commerce' to be cut out.

The unfortunate Xianfeng emperor had already lost his capital but his brother Prince Gong was pushing back the barbarians to save the country and so had no other choice but to request that the word 'commerce' not be used and the imperial ratification was given.

The Zongli Yamen was established with the remit for dealing with foreign affairs in the broadest sense and its powers grew to surpass those of the Grand Council.

24 January 2009 at night.

ESSAY 70

Wenxiang and the Zongli Yamen

Wenxiang was one of the founders of the Zongli Yamen in the late Qing. It was formally established on 11 March 1861 (Xianfeng 11) and staffed with officials who were also attached to the Grand Council. Wenxiang became the chief assistant to Prince Gong, who led the Yamen and remained so until his death on 26 May 1876, a total of fifteen years and two and a half months.

The Qing dynasty at this time had three changes of emperor. The two empresses dowager, Cixi and Ci'an ruled as regents 'from behind the curtain', and by political trickery removed Prince Gong from office three times. As a result of this Wenxiang became the effective head of the Zongli Yamen and in the period that encompassed the Xianfeng, Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns he was the single most important figure in this turbulent period of China's foreign relations.

According to his autobiography he was a Manchu of the Plain Red Banner and the Guwalgiya clan, and his ancestral home was the old Manchu capital of Mukden. He achieved the *jinshi* degree in 1845 at the age of 27 and became an official in Beijing, rising through the ranks to the post of Sub-Chancellor of the Grand Secretariat and Deputy Secretary of the Board of Punishments in May 1858. He then had appointments in the Board of Rites, the Board of Civil Office, the Board of Works and the Board of Revenue: he entered the Grand Council at the age of forty. His achievements were not at all clear. When the British and French forces approached Beijing the terrified emperor prepared to flee to Rehe and this was opposed by many of his senior nobles and officials, with 'Wenxiang of the Grand Council arguing particularly strenuously against it'. Perhaps because of this, in August of the same year the Xianfeng emperor forsook the Old Summer Palace for the 'autumn hunt in Mulan' and, of the officials of the Grand Council, the only one remaining in Beijing was Wenxiang.

At this time the emperor had appointed his brother Prince Gong as Imperial Commissioner to remain in Beijing to parley with the British and the French and directed Grand Secretary Guiliang and Wenxiang, in his capacity as Assistant Secretary of the Board of Revenue, to assist him. Prince Gong was unfamiliar with foreign relations and his father-in-law Guiliang was elderly, decrepit and incompetent. The negotiations with the British and French depended entirely on Wenxiang.

The *Diaries of Weng Tonghe* indicates that he had been aware of the activities of Wenxiang for some time. He records the chaos in Beijing after the flight

of the Xianfeng emperor and how Wenxiang was responsible for maintaining order, taking command of the Beijing gendarmerie and also the palace guard of the Old Summer Palace. Wenxiang was willing to sacrifice his own life to carry out this task but he was not superior in rank to the officials in charge of guarding the gates of Beijing and consequently they would not obey his orders and he was obliged to work with other Manchus to try to pacify the garrison of bannermen defending the capital and ensure that there was no worse chaos in the city.

Later when the court had signed the 'Treaties of Beijing' with the British, French and Russians, the emperor exiled from Beijing with the officials in his Rehe palace largely approved of them. The officials remaining in Beijing who had been involved in the negotiations with the foreigners had had complete authority to do so and relations with the Rehe officials had changed as the emperor was in no position to return in his official carriage. Prince Gong was effectively the public face of the court in Beijing and in the winter of 1860 (Xinfeng 10) the emperor in exile demanded that Prince Gong and his colleagues prepare a document on how to deal with 'barbarian affairs'. On 13 January 1861 Prince Gong, Guiliang and Wenxiang sent the document of six clauses that Prince Gong had prepared earlier. Of the six clauses the most important was the first—the establishment of the Zongli Yamen. From biographical material about Wenxiang, it is clear that this key point came from him and from this time onwards the court had a specialist foreign office.

As has been mentioned previously, since the reigns of the father and son, Yongzheng and Qianlong, the Qing had more and more taken the view that foreign affairs were matters for the imperial family and even those officials who were permitted to send memorials to the emperor dare not criticise the emperor's trusted lackeys who were untouchable because they were regarded as working on behalf of the imperial family. Their three successors the Jiaqing, Daoguang and Xiangfeng emperors were each less capable than the previous one, used the pretext of the ancestral system and the only thing they were afraid of was changes in the system of government that might weaken the emperor's personal despotism. Therefore when the Xianfeng emperor ratified the establishment of the Zongli Yamen that year, he emphasised that its remit should be 'commercial' in nature and that it was essentially a temporary institution. The situation was in flux and Prince Gong, Wenxiang and Guiliang, who had had plenipotentiary powers in negotiations with the British, French and Russian as the only senior government officials remaining in Beijing, were able to take control. The only other centre of authority was the group of officials around the Xianfeng emperor in the Rehe palace.

Therefore Xianfeng and his Rehe officials were forced to accept the reality of power in Beijing. Through discussions with Prince Gong, the emperor agreed that the word ‘commercial’ could be removed from the constitution of the Zongli Yamen, thus acknowledging that it was a Board of Foreign Affairs and not a Board of Foreign Trade. However Xianfeng and his officials still insisted that it be a temporary structure, indicating their inability to to move away from the ancestral traditions of the Grand Secretariat.

As a result although the status of the Zongli Yamen was important and it had seized the right to determine foreign policy from the Grand Council, in the three reigns of Xianfeng, Tongzhi and Guangxu, it remained a temporary organisation. It was not until after the signing of the Boxer Protocol in 1901 and the flight of the Empress Dowager Cixi and her government to Xi’an that an edict was issued to reform the official structure and for the first time treat the Zongli Yamen as a Foreign Office, transforming it from a temporary institution into an official and permanent one, forty years after its foundation. What is more the ‘new official system’ ranked the officials of the Zongli Yamen on a level with those of the Grand Secretariat and many of its officials also held posts in the Grand Council. These changes did not take place until a quarter of a century after the death of Wenxiang.

The Zongli Yamen in the late Qing period functioned as a foreign office or as a higher level planning organisation for military, political, commercial and cultural relations with foreign countries. It was an important structure but because of its temporary nature there was no section devoted to it in the official *Qingshigao*, which is not only laughable but preposterous.

The Qing was the final dynasty that could preserve the autocratic monarchical form of mediaeval China. Whether ancient or modern, Chinese or foreign, authority in this type of monarchy always moves towards one major characteristic, rule by man as opposed to rule by law. The so-called rulers of men were actually, as Confucius maintained, ‘if they are not on the throne they are engaged in political plots’. In the Xianfeng reign period, Sushun was not only the son of a concubine of the imperial clan, but in 1860 (Xianfeng 10) when the emperor moved to the ‘temporary palace’ in Rehe, he was Grand Chamberlain, President of the Board of Revenue and promoted to Assistant Grand Secretary and in command of the Imperial Bodyguards. He never became a member of the Grand Council and always had the title of ‘prime minister’, although his authority extended outside the court. By contrast Wenxiang joined the Grand Council at an early stage in his career, even though his official status was only that of a Vice President of a Board, but among those who remained in Beijing his status and authority were considerable. On the death of the Xianfeng

emperor Sushun became in practice the leader of the eight senior advisory officials at the temporary palace in Rehe and Wenxiang was one of the major decision makers in Prince Gong's second government in Beijing. In the 1861 coup Prince Gong and the Empress Dowager Cixi colluded inside and outside the palace and had Sushun dismissed from his position as head of the Rehe officials. Wenxiang's role at this time was described in the *Qingshigao* as 'truly a loyal servant of the sacred altars of the dynasty', a bulwark of the state. Mary C. Wright in her classic account of the Tongzhi Restoration describes him as one of the key decision makers of the Zongli Yamen but his role in China's relations with the outside world has been generally overlooked.

28 January 2009, at night.

ESSAY 71

Wang Maoyin and Late Qing Views on Foreign Relations

From the appearance of the Zongli Yamen in Beijing on 20 January 1861 (Xianfeng 10) to 24 June 1901 when its name was changed to Foreign Ministry, a period of forty years and six months which spanned the three reigns of Xianfeng, Tongzhi and Guangxu, it was a temporary body within the Manchu Qing system with personnel who were not on the permanent staff.

Its tortuous beginnings have been outlined elsewhere, but the peculiar thing about it was that it was an unestablished department that was legally established by the Manchu Qing regime, operated from the centre to the provinces, and acquired more and more decision-making powers. Its function has been debated by modern historians, but generally speaking it had responsibility for the management of foreign relations and foreign trade, while simultaneously supervising such diverse fields as the customs, maritime defences, purchase of vehicles and trains, manufacture of armaments, railways, mines, telegraph, the institute of translators and interpreters (Tongwenguan) and the despatch of students abroad. What had earlier been termed 'barbarian affairs' later became 'foreign affairs' or 'foreign matters' and there were no political military, financial or cultural matters in which it did not become involved. It also had direct control over officials responsible for maritime trade in the north and south and later even replaced the Lifanyuan (Department of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs) that had traditionally managed relations with these 'vassal states'.

In the middle of the 18th century, the Qianlong emperor boasted of his 'ten great military campaigns', the Manchu occupation and control that was recognised internationally, but there was a reversal during the Kangxi reign, characterised by the concept of a stale and outworn 'universal state' that was common in the late middle ages, and the idea of renewing the occupation of the lost territories. From the end of the Qianlong reign to the Jiaqing period, the way in which the emperors dealt with the arrogant British who came to China was a model for succeeding monarchs, officials and the populace in general. By the time of the two Opium Wars in the Daoguang and Xianfeng reigns, nothing remained of this model.

Needless to say the officials and people of the empire were not repeatedly fooled in the later years under Qianlong and his son and grandson. When the British and French military attacked the outskirts of Beijing, Prince Gong was

appointed special commissioner for peace negotiations in a great hurry by the Xianfeng emperor. According to H.B. Morse who had met him and wrote *Foreign Relations of the Chinese Empire* he was not very intelligent. However his chief assistant Wenxiang was a senior Manchu official who was up to date with current affairs (see the chapter on 'Wenxian and the Zongli Yamen' and his biography in the *Qingshigao*). This Manchu Assistant Secretary who had served in the Grand Secretariat and the five Boards of Punishment, Rights, Civil Office, Revenue and Works was one of the initial senior appointees to the Zongli Yamen in 1861. During the stormy power struggle between Cixi and Prince Gong in the Tongzhi reign, he towered over both the Grand Council and the head office of the Zongli Yamen; it remains unclear by what tricks of the trade he managed to retain his position. In 1875 after a long illness he was promoted to the post of Grand Secretary of the Hall of Military Glory, dying in May 1876. His replacement at the head of the Grand Secretariat was Li Hongzhang who also replaced the disgraced Prince Gong as the *de facto* head of the Grand Council and also as head of the Zongli Yamen. Wenxiang's authority and status in the government of the Tongzhi and Guangxu reign periods fluctuated so much that it is difficult to describe precisely. However two memorials that he sent in the first two years of the Guangxu reign outlining his secret plans are worth re-examining.

Perhaps because Wenxiang realised that he was never going to recover from his illness, the two memorials seem unusually frank and straightforward. The two folded paper memorials that look back on the failures in foreign policy during the three reigns of Jiaqing, Daoguang and Xianfeng, consider whether it was a case of human error and whether the fault lay with the monarch or, in diametric opposition, the people. What was surprising was that he actually said that the main problem that lay behind the repeated defeats at the hands of Western powers since the Daoguang and Xianfeng period was that Western countries all took into account the 'public sentiment', which China did not and the result was defeat.

Wenxiang's proposals were no more than those put forward sixty years previously by Gong Zizhen when he advocated 'self reform', but in the first year of the Guangxu reign, trying to get to the root of the problem, he referred to a memorial sent to the emperor by Wang Maoyin in 1856 quoting classical authorities. This Wang Maoyin was from Shexian in Anhui province and had achieved the *jinshi* degree in 1832 and had ups and downs in his career in various departments of the Qing court. During the Qianlong period he repeatedly sent memorials to the court expressing his opinions and became an Assistant Secretary at the Board of Revenue and manager of the mint.

At this time the Qing court was beset by difficulties both domestic and foreign. In the capital and its environs there was currency inflation: the internal conflict had cut off the main source of copper in Yunnan so the copper cash used by the general population for trade became expensive against the silver standard. The Qing court formulated a policy of collecting in copper cash, melting it down and re-coining it, originally fixing that the weight of ten copper cash would yield 50, 100 or even 1,000, which led to an outbreak of theft of copper coins and casts among the populace. Counterfeit currency circulated widely in the Beijing region, which was supposed to be at the feet of the son of heaven, leading to frequent disorder. Wang Maoyin, in charge of the mint at the Board of Revenue, took the view that casting large amounts of coinage was not appropriate and petitioned the emperor to be permitted to issue paper currency. Because paper currency could not be exchanged for ready money the level of inflation would be worsened. His ideas on currency were taken from Russians in China and are referred to in Karl Marx's *Capital* Volume 1, Section 1, where he mentions the criticisms of a Xianfeng period official that the currency was entirely for the benefit of the traders and not at all for the benefit of the imperial household. Unexpectedly this made Wang Maoyin one of Guo Moruo's famous Chinese of the late Qing period, in spite of Marx's criticisms of his economic theories. Nevertheless it should not be overlooked that Wang Maoyin was one of the late 19th century Qing officials who wanted fundamental change in foreign relations.

Wang Maoyin's 'memorials on barbarian affairs' that have been referred to previously drew heavily on the *Book of History* or *Book of Documents* [*Shangshu*] which refers to the need to consider the will of heaven and the will of the people. Wang was however influenced by ideas of a Qing revival that was associated with the study of the philosophy of Wang Yangming and the concept of 'all within the four oceans' and pandered to the concept of the monarch representing the will of heaven, and the idea that heaven was superior to the people. This outlook was not restricted to the court and the commonality but extended to relations between the Chinese and the barbarians. As it was explained in the *Book of History*, whether the emperor is close or far away, what matters is whether or not he is virtuous. If he is virtuous then there is happiness and prosperity in all the seasons. The contemporary battles with the overseas powers required a return to considering the will of the people and the mandate of heaven which should be embodied in the mind of the sovereign. Wang Maoyin's logical conclusion was, in Wenxiang's view, alarmist but it hit the mark in terms of the politics of the time, prioritising the will of heaven over the will of the people in weakening the 'will of the barbarians'.

It provides an explanation for the foreign policies of the Prince Gong faction which seemed to go against the traditions of the ancestors.

During the more than 130 years and five reigns of the Qing dynasty from the Yongzheng through Qianlong, Jiaqing, Daoquang and Xianfeng, it was more and more a case of 'the imperial court dominating the state'

This viewpoint was also obviously part of the teachings of Du Shoutian, the chief tutor in the Palace School for Princes who considered himself to be a Neo-Confucian and was a lifelong support to the Xianfeng emperor. He was driven out of Beijing by the British and French forces and was obliged to affix the imperial seal to the humiliating treaties signed with the British, French and Russians. Until his death he refused to return to the capital, the real reason being his fear of the diplomatic envoys of Europe and the United States who were based in Beijing and, especially their refusal to agree to the ritual of the kowtow and the subsequent complete loss of face for the emperor.

When Wenxiang first advocated the establishment of the Zongli Yamen, in place of Prince Gong's secret memorials, he intended that relations between the Qing and Britain, France and Russia should be managed like those between the states of Wei, Shu and Wu in the Three Kingdoms period. However through the practicalities of the Zongli Yamen's involvement in foreign affairs, he quickly came to realise that dealing with the European powers at that time was really not comparable with relations between the states after the Han and Jin dynasties. After the series of defeats suffered by the Qing court it was not possible to behave as the Son of Heaven towards minor states. After 15 years of involvement in 'barbarian affairs' he finally decided, when he was practically on his deathbed, to tell the truth to the Empress Dowager and announce that his opinions had been expressed by Wang Maoyin almost 20 years previously.

31 January 2009, at night.

ESSAY 72

Name and Reality of the Zongli Yamen in the Late Qing Period

The establishment of the Zongli Yamen, over twenty years after the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing between Britain and the Qing, has been discussed in 'The difficult birth of the Zongli Yamen', as has its nature, a temporary organisation to manage 'barbarian affairs'. Even the official *Qingshigao*, compiled in the early days of the Republic, has little specialist information on the institution. Its temporary nature did not come to an end until 1901 (Guangxu 27), although it had been 'temporary' for almost forty years.

As has also been discussed, the restrictions put on the Zongli Yamen by the Xianfeng emperor were reflected in its name which in full included the phrase 'commercial matters', although this was removed after secret representations by Prince Gong. But in edicts and similar documents of the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns, when its full name was used it retained that phrase, suggesting that its authority was restricted to foreign trade and was not in charge of foreign diplomacy in its entirety for the empire.

It is necessary to reconsider the Manchu Qing concept of 'foreign diplomacy'. As far back as the first century AD, it was considered that officials did not have any role in foreign diplomacy and that set the pattern for all the dynasties of mediaeval China, where it was supposed to remain the prerogative of the imperial family. In reality the dynasties and states of mediaeval China, including the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu Qing, were all part of the territory of China and had diplomatic relations with each other which could be termed 'internal diplomacy'. Thus the meaning of 'foreign diplomacy' in mediaeval China was really limited to the interaction between the various courts and monarchs, large and small. However the traditional concept was an inertial force. In the three dynasties of the Yuan, Ming and Qing, the Chinese people were clearly aware of the great number of countries beyond their territory and were also clearly aware that China was not the same as 'the world'. Towards the end of the 16th century, the world map drawn by the Italian Jesuit, Matteo Ricci, had become popular outside as well as within the late Ming and early Qing courts and the real creator of a unified empire, the Kangxi emperor, could look on the world through the eyes of one who was fairly equal to France, Russia and other monarchies as can be shown from diplomatic activities and documents.

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After the death of Kangxi and his canonisation as Shengzu, the five emperors, Yongzheng, Qianlong, Jiaqing, Daoguang and Xianfeng, all included the character *zong* in their temple names, formally acknowledging to the world their descent from Shengzu. However they were not all the same. Yongzheng and Qianlong were not afraid to receive envoys from Western countries and although there was a prohibition on their religious teachings there was none on trade. The Jiaqing emperor was inclined to believe false information given to him by his senior officials and against the rules of propriety kept the British envoys and officials outside the borders of the empire. The Daoguang emperor muddled the smuggling of opium with regular trade and could not distinguish between the British and American traders in Guangdong and that British diplomats were not able to control Americans. He sat deep in his palace in Beijing, operating the prohibition on opium in Guangdong by 'remote control' and cut off all foreign commercial activities. After the defeat in the Opium War, he could not have been more stupid in issuing hopeless and arbitrary orders. The Xianfeng emperor used amateurs to deal with both internal and external conflicts and failed to understand what was going on. Face was desperately important to him and even when the British and French invaders were approaching the outskirts of Beijing, he issued confused instructions and took as hostages enemy representatives who had come to discuss a ceasefire and had them tortured, the result being the first fall of the imperial capital, which can be compared with the later performance of his concubine, Cixi during the Boxer wars.

From Daoguang to Xianfeng, the way that this father and son dealt with the 'Western barbarians' indicates clearly the narrowness of their vision and their complete lack of understanding compared with the earlier emperors. In their handling of foreign affairs, whether it was judgement, decisions, negotiations, the appropriateness of war peace talks or treaties, all the authority rested with the emperor, showing that they clung to the antiquated concept of officials not being involved in foreign diplomacy. All sorts of 'imperial commissioners' could be removed on the whim of the emperor and permission to use the imperial seal on treaties could be withheld, treating affairs of state as if they were trifling matters. Therefore this father and son pair during two Opium Wars relied on their own moods, which exacerbated the conflicts and caused greater losses.

At the end of the Daoguang reign, Xianfeng and his younger brother Prince Gong quarrelled and relied on advice offered by the imperial tutor Du Shoutian, rather like Xue Baochai advising Lin Daiyu in the novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Xianfeng eventually became emperor and in order to demonstrate his filial piety, on ascending the throne he appointed Prince Gong to head the Grand Council. Just over a year later he took the opportunity of the death of

Prince Gong's mother to detail him to handle the funeral arrangements, effectively deposing him and sending him back to his studies. He dare not follow ancestral precedents because, after the Jiaqing emperor had used his younger brother Prince Cheng to attack the favoured courtier Heshen, he had excluded him from the Grand Council. By suggesting that Prince Gong had been unfilial, and driving him out of the centre of government on a pretext, this emperor was clearly behaving with sinister motives. Five years later, when the emperor fled the capital, and Prince Gong as Imperial Commissioner was in charge temporarily and ordered to remain in Beijing to negotiate a peace agreement, he carried out talks with the British and French at gunpoint. Needless to say this gave Prince Gong 'a taste of sweet potato'. The success indicated that the emperor knew the qualities of the man as if he had failed he would undoubtedly have been blamed. The *Chouban yiwu shimo* demonstrates that they were two of a kind, although Prince Gong was more intelligent than his half-brother. At first he hid in the distant outskirts, sat tight and observed the rout of the two armies of Senggerinchin and Duanlin; the plunder of the Old Summer Palace; and the officials in the capital opening the gates to the robbers. He colluded with Sheng Bao and sent repeated memorials like snowflakes to the emperor about the emergency. When matters were more settled he stuck his head out and, 'braving the danger', made contact with the head of the British and French forces and signed the Treaties of Beijing with the British, French and Russians. Naturally all of his confidential messages announced the damage wrought in the occupation of Beijing by the foreign troops, including the burning of the Old Summer Palace. He had disobeyed the instructions of the emperor in an edict that he was not to have face to face discussions with the 'barbarian chieftains' but he had saved the capital.

It goes without saying that the British and French withdrew from Beijing in line with the terms of the treaty and this earned Prince Gong the name of 'Virtuous King'. Because the Xianfeng emperor demanded that the 'whole situation be taken into account' after the war, the prince plotted with Wenxiang to set up the Zongli Yamen, its name indicating that it would specialise in foreign affairs and care was taken not to infringe the authority of the emperor and the Grand Council. In practice what was being established in Beijing was a second government headed by Prince Gong. The Xianfeng emperor had no alternative but to agree, but insisted that the remit of the organisation be restricted to commerce and that it should be temporary. Prince Gong and Wenxiang, apart from demanding the removal of the commercial restriction, encouraged the Xianfeng emperor to make a western tour and establish a secondary capital in Xi'an. Naturally they played on the edicts from the emperor, in which he had relayed his nervousness about returning to Beijing, but there were also other

reasons which were not made explicit, including the destruction of the Old Summer Palace and the emperor's dislike of living in the imperial palace in what is now known as the Forbidden City. It would be far better for him to go to Xi'an and establish a new palace there. After all the emperor was almost thirty years old and had a long life ahead of him; whether he returned to Beijing or another capital in Xi'an his younger half-brother would still be under his control. He refused to agree to Prince Gong's requests to be allowed to travel to the palace at Rehe for a face to face meeting and after much dissipation began spitting blood and died at the age of just 31. There was no time before his death to approve an administration of his eight senior official advisers. He did not hand over the seal bearing the characters, *tongdao tang* (hall of common ideals) to the infant crown prince but left it in the safekeeping of the boy's mother the future Empress Dowager Cixi [this seal was to be impressed at the end of every imperial edict]. However according to instructions issued before the emperor's death, another seal, bearing the characters *yushang* [the emperor grants] was given to the Empress Dowager Ci'an [this had to be impressed at the beginning of every edict]. The Empress Dowager Cixi had the one seal and was prepared to use it in the name of her son but both seals had to be used for an edict to be lawful. This 'mother who had taken the status of her son' and newly promoted Empress Dowager was overwhelmingly ambitious. At first she incited trouble against the other Empress Dowager, doubting the loyalty of the eight regents. Historical research suggests that when the Xianfeng emperor was seriously ill, she plotted with eunuchs and officials and Prince Gong who had remained in Beijing, creating an alliance of her own supporters and an administration of Sushun and the other seven advisers. To legitimise her position in terms of Manchu traditions, not only did she destabilize the other Empress Dowager but undermined the new authority that Prince Gong had acquired in Beijing. They permitted him to come to Rehe to wail at the funeral of the Xianfeng emperor, as was fair and reasonable, but under their very eyes she awaited the opportunity to launch a coup d'etat. Thus the 1861 coup happened, the historical legitimacy of the eight advisors was abolished and Qing history moved into the age of Cixi.

26 January 2009.

ESSAY 73

Did the Manchu Qing 'Inherit a Worn Out Process of Change'?

Towards the end of the 2nd century BC, Sima Qian pointed out how Liu Bang and his generals and ministers were able to seize ultimate victory from the chaos at the collapse of the Qin dynasty and establish the Han dynasty, promising 'a rule of eternal peace' but warning that 'inheriting a worn out process of change' would not benefit the populace.

This appears to be a prediction of the fate of all the long line of dynasties from the Han to the Qing. Mediaeval China produced hundreds of dynasties, large and small, but whichever ethnic group was at the core of the dynasty, whatever its level of civilisation, and however it took power, once an emperor or king had been named, all of them, at some level or other, threw off the evil practices of the old regime and gave hope to the freed masses, with a regime gaining its legitimacy from heaven.

The Manchu Qing dynasty was just like this. This minor ethnic group from the northern frontiers rebelled against the Ming and then created a Manchu culture, taking over Ming customs, modifying shamanist beliefs and taking advantage of the conflict at the end of the Ming to 'learn from the advanced technology of the Ming in order to defeat them' (see Wei Yuan's *Shengwuji*) and in the end 'using the Han to control the Han' by utilising the Ming military to conquer the whole country, creating a united state second only to that created by the Mongol Yuan dynasty.

The rulers at the core of this empire were the elite of the Eight Banners who now referred to themselves as Manchus. They were like the Xiongnu, Di, Qiang, Xianbei, Qidan, Jurchen and Mongols and other small ethnic groups that had previously entered and conquered China and ruled over the Han. There was however one difference as the Manchus were the descendants of the Jurchen which had established the Jin dynasty and they were afraid that they might repeat the mistakes of the Jin and assimilate to the civilisation of the Chinese. Therefore when the Manchus entered the passes and took Beijing in 1644 (the first year of the Shunzhi reign) they enforced a strict separation of Manchu and Han and their power structures were based on the necessity of Manchus controlling Han. Policy decisions were made by the Military Council of the Eight Banners and the administrative structures were based on a twin-track system with both Manchu and Han officials but with the bannermen

dominant. The capital, Beijing, and its environs and all major cities were garrisoned by Manchu troops and the Han and other non-Manchu people were obliged to adopt the queue or 'pigtail' with heads shaved at the front and Manchu dress. Intermarriage between Manchu and Han was prohibited and the Manchu and Mongol bannermen were not allowed to forsake their military training and status and study the civilised arts for a scholarly career; they were not even allowed to take the imperial examinations alongside the Han. The Manchu script was designated the 'national script' and the Manchu language the 'national language', the Hans were forced to read and study the classics for entry to the Hanlin Academy, and any officials within the court who dared to criticise the policy of 'Manchu inside and Han outside' were subject to merciless attacks. These were the methods used to achieve a separation of the ethnic groups but were they effective? (1) the sons of the bannermen were brought up with a consciousness of their own special privileges; (2) the ethnic banner system with the Manchus at their head was transformed into a parasitic class or clan; (3) for centuries the conquering Manchus and the conquered Han who were in the majority were estranged from each other; (4) the vast majority of officials and people in the empire saw the 'state' or the 'nation' as synonymous with the Manchus, so loving one's family, clan and locality was more important than loving the empire; (5) when faced with invasion from external tribes or nations, from the point of view of the conquering Manchus, family and clan enmity was usually more important than national enmity.

The war of conquest after the Manchus had entered the passes was exceptionally brutal: territory was enclosed, and cities were sacked and looted, especially in the southern provinces where it was almost a return to the conquests in the early phases of the Jin or Yuan dynasties. However by the middle of the Kangxi reign, the country was unified in a way that was unprecedented, there had been no conflict in China Proper for a hundred years and this provided a stable environment for the development of production and cultural continuity. The Manchu policy of opposing 'Hanisation' actually produced the opposite effect. The queue and shaved head were retained but the Chinese language and script spread widely among the assimilated races, the culturally backward Manchu, Mongol, Tibetan and Muslim peoples, and became an unbreakable bond between the peoples of China, and for this the Manchu Qing dynasty has to be thanked. There are of course many historical examples of the negative impact of two hundred and sixty plus years of Manchu rule and space does not permit more than a brief overview here.

24 February 2008, at night.

PART 8

Remembering the Empress Dowager Cixi

ESSAY 74

From Xianfeng to Cixi

On 22 August 1861 (Xianfeng 11), the 7th Qing emperor died in the palace at Rehe after an illness; he was thirty one years old. The Manchu Aisin Gioro clan lost its chieftain and the Manchu, Mongol and Han Chinese Banners lost the head of their tribal confederacy. What outsiders referred to as the Chinese empire lost a despotic emperor.

Can Xianfeng be considered the last of the despots in a tradition that spanned two centuries and three emperors? In reality the imperial system did not change and the next three emperors, who took the reign titles of Tongzhi, Guangxu and Xuantong, were still of the Aisin Gioro clan bloodline and the system continued the autocratic monarchy that had already lasted for two hundred and twenty years.

The Xianfeng emperor may have 'led his troops in battle' for seventy days but as he came to the end of his life, the process of succession was nothing other than a palace coup.

Xianfeng had been on the throne for eleven years. He passed himself off as virtuous and tricked the muddleheaded Daoguang emperor into designating him the heir to the throne, after which his playboy nature was revealed as he took numerous concubines and consorts, enobling so many of them with honorific titles that even he had difficulty in distinguishing one from another. There were also battles with officials for the affections of women who had been brought into the palace. His reproductive power was weak and in seven years as an emperor he only had two sons and the second of these died in infancy. Therefore when he became seriously ill and began vomiting blood, Zaichun, at the age of 6 *sui*, became the only successor and eventually the eighth son of heaven in the dynasty.

Needless to say, the 'mother assumed the status of the son' and, on the day after the Xianfeng emperor breathed his last, the young emperor's mother, Yehonala [Cixi, the Western Empress Dowager] was promoted to Empress Dowager, the Mother of the Emperor so that she was accorded the same level of veneration as the late emperor's empress, Niohuru [Ci'an, also known as the Eastern Empress Dowager].

Huizheng, the father of the Western Empress Dowager, Cixi, was a Manchu official of the Bordered Blue Banner who had served in southern Anhui. He had two sons and two daughters and she was the oldest. There are many extraordinary stories about her early career. What is certain is that she had travelled to southern China with her father, the family were poor and she knew the

melodies of the Jiangxi and Zhejiang operas. However she did not know the written Manchu language and her spoken Manchu was poor. In 1851 (Xianfeng 1) she was 17 *sui* and travelled to Beijing for the selection of imperial concubines in which she was successful and became one of the servants in the setting of Old Summer Palace. Her opera singing pleased the emperor and she was promoted to the status of Estimable Concubine of the Third Rank (*Yifei*) and then rose up the harem bureaucracy when she produced the emperor's first son to become eventually consort of the second degree. When the emperor was in his final illness it is said that he was afraid that she would cause trouble after his death and sent a secret edict to the other Empress Dowager, Ci'an, warning that although Cixi was the mother of his son it was essential to ensure that the dynastic succession was legitimate and that he would rule according to the rules of the family ancestors (*Qingchao yeshi daguan*, Book 1).

What is more, in the instructions that Xianfeng left while on his deathbed, at the same time as the infant Zaichun became heir apparent he designated eight regents to be responsible for all government business According to Wu Xiangxian *Wan Qing gongting shiji*, in 1661 when the Shunzhi emperor was coming to the end of his life, he had appointed four officials to act as regents to the infant Kangxi emperor and two hundred years later Xianfeng may have been using this as a precedent. Although the four regents appointed by Shunzhi were Manchus, none were of the rank of *beile* [prince or chief] and none with the prestige of Shunzhi's mother (of a Mongol banner) or Kangxi's mother. Of the regents appointed by Xianfeng, three were Han Chinese officials of the Grand Council who had fled with him to Rehe, and five were Manchus, including two princes one from a close branch of the imperial clan and one more distant; Sushun was from a distant branch but Jingshou was related to the Daoguang emperor's sixth wife so Xianfeng's regents included several of *beile* rank. Prince Gong, who had remained in Beijing to handle the withdrawal of British and French troops, was among those excluded from this council of regents as a result of collusion bytween Xianfeng and Sushun.

After Shunzhi had set the precedent in 1661, Oboi and the other regents established a dictatorship which had to be overthrown by the Kangxi emperor in a palace coup. In 1861 the decree empowering Sushun and the other seven regents to take charge of the affairs of state did not emerge from the palace at Rehe and within seventy days Cixi and Prince Gong had plotted a criminal seizure of power. Sushun was executed, the Princes Yi and Zheng were forced to commit suicide and the rest were dismissed from office and exiled. The whole process was a farce and although it is usually referred to as a coup d'etat, precise details of the plot remain unclear as some documents have been lost. Many aspects of this episode require further discussion. The coup itself was a transient event and relatively peaceful but from the historical perspective it

signifies the end of the form of rule in the Manchu Qing empire that had lasted for seven generations. From then until the collapse of the Qing fifty years later, the form of this empire was still the same but the power structure had been completely reshuffled and there are five aspects of this phenomenon that are worth mentioning.

(1) In those fifty years as the late Qing writer Zhang Taiyan [Zhang Binglin] put it, 'autocracy still loved the new' [except that the Chinese characters for 'loves the new' are also the first two characters in the name of the imperial Manchu Aisin Gioro clan], but only in its form.

All of the three emperors, Tongzhi, Guangxu and Xuantong, who reigned after the death of the Xianfeng emperor were puppets, and this indicates clearly that the rule of the Aisin Gioro family had in reality come to an end after the 1861 coup.

(2) In those fifty years the nucleus of imperial power had been displaced by the 1861 coup. The new nucleus was the cligque headed by the woman who history would know as Empress Dowager Ci Xi or the Western Empress Dowager. This concubine of the Xianfeng emperor who had been honoured with the title 'Sage Mother Empress Dowager', was just twenty-six years old and her ability to manoeuvre among the political factions had been finely honed after ten years in the palace. She had no ally and no clear objectives. The Empress Dowager Ci'an and Prince Gong, and the Manchu elite, including the 'clear stream' scholars uncontaminated by politics who were known as the 'four censors of the Hanlin', and the chiefs of the Hunan and Huai armies supported the Boxers' aim of 'sustain the Qing and exterminate the foreigners', were all used and obstructed by her and then disposed of them as if they were worn out shoes. By the time of her death at the age of 74, all the power in the empire had been concentrated in her person for forty seven years and she had broken the historical records held by women rulers in the Han dynasty (Empress Lu) and the Tang dynasty (Empress Wu Zetian) and other tyrants of mediaeval China.

(3) In those fifty years Cixi also broke the record for the outbreak of internal disorder and external threat that humiliated the country. Three times she 'ruled from behind the curtain' and had three times been beaten in wars with foreigners. On the first occasion she ruled from behind that curtain in conjunction with the Empress Dowager Ci'an and used the Hunan and Huai armies to annihilate the Taiping and the Nian and also used the 'clear stream' scholars headed by the northerners to attack the 'foreign matters' movement that was headed by southerners. On the second occasion that she 'ruled from behind the screen' after the sudden and

unexplained death of Ci'an, she sent the 'clear stream' scholars who had no understanding of military matters to the front line in the war between the Qing and France, at the cost of the destruction of the Southern Fleet, brooking no criticism and protecting her own autocracy. When she was sixty years of age she abstracted funds intended for the navy to construct the Yiheyuan Summer Palace. As a result China lost the war with Japan, the Northern Fleet was wiped out, Korea became a colony of Japan and Taiwan had to be ceded to the victors. Japan became the parvenu of modernisation and the Qing empire became the 'sick man of East Asia'. She strangled the 1898 reform movement and in the third period when she 'ruled from behind the curtain', within two years China had been invaded by the armies of eight Western nations. This time the defeat was even more miserable and if she had not seized the puppet emperor and run off with him he would have become a prisoner of war of the foreigners. With her late husband the Xianfeng emperor she had also created the record for having her capital occupied twice by the enemy.

(4) In the final stage of those fifty years, in order to beg forgiveness from the invading powers, Cixi collected from each of China's 450 million people the sum of one *tael* of silver so that she could return to the capital as empress. China had effectively become a joint colony of the European powers and the United States. She went as far as to pretend to be the implementer of the 1898 reforms, announced the 'preparation of a constitution' and danced to the baton of the foreign powers.

(5) Cixi's final masterpiece was the 'reform of the official system'. Right up to her death she set herself against her foster son, the Guangxu emperor, and only three years after she and Guangxu had been buried her empire was completely finished.

It is said that when Nurhachi conqured the Manchu tribes he wiped out all the males in the Yehe (Yehonala) tribe, his rivals. As he died the tribal chief uttered a curse, 'if of my sons and grandsons only a daughter remains, she will revive the Manchus [and bring down the Aisin Gioro]'. He could not have predicted that when Cixi came to power she would lead the Qing empire to its destruction. It is of course absurd to think that the curse took three hundred years to take effect, but this woman from the Aisin Gioro family, who usurped the hereditary regime of the Yehonala clan, ruled the empire for almost half a century and her disastrous effect on China requires a historical explanation.

10 January 2009, at night.

ESSAY 75

The Legality of Cixi's Regency

Some justification for a woman ruler has been found in sections of the *Book of Documents* which is said by some to have been compiled by Confucius. Since the reign of Han Wudi there have been clear prohibitions on a female monarch although a tradition of the filial piety of a son towards his mother has also been used to justify the influence of an emperor's mother, especially while the son was still an infant. There are many instances in history of the involvement of empresses dowager in state affairs from the Han to the Ming dynasty, and this only goes to show that the Confucian arts of ruling have always contained laws that were not obeyed and were interpreted according to the circumstances of the time.

The Manchu Qing 'ancestral system' did not permit the involvement of empresses dowager in the affairs of state. There are historical reasons for this which will not be discussed here but during the two hundred years of Manchu control over the whole of China the system was smashed by the 'behind the curtain rule in two palaces' and the novelty of the appearance of two empresses dowager actively involving themselves in government. The novelty of this phenomenon was that it was outside the main narrative of the dynasty and it was strange in that an imperial concubine was relying on an ancient instruction from the *Spring and Autumn Annals* on a 'mother acquiring the status of her son' in reference to the mother of an early emperor acting in his stead. There is no trace of this to be found in the Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism of the Qing emperors and naturally after hundreds of years there are new interpretations of 'supreme instructions', with the facts preceding the idea. Authentic historical accounts of the 'twin palace regency' demonstrate that it was there before any struggle over the concepts and that it was a product of the coup d'etat of 1861.

This phenomenon appeared on the cusp of the Xianfeng and Tongzhi reigns (the autumn and winter of 1850) and most Qing or modern historians have necessarily addressed the matter although it has often been treated in a perfunctory way, in particular the question of legality in terms of classical or Manchu 'Confucian devices'.

As he neared the end of his life the Xianfeng emperor left instructions for a group of eight 'nobles and officials to assist in political affairs' in cooperation. Xianfeng and his trusted aides, far from the imperial capital for over a year could see that political power was coming under the control of Prince Gong

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and his supporters, who had become the actual administrative core of the state. To prevent losing power to his subordinates they excluded Prince Gong from the circle of advisers and also took measures against the overweeningly ambitious Cixi. Unexpectedly Prince Gong and Cixi had been in contact with each other clandestinely for some time. Sushun and his colleagues lost their leader with the death of the Xianfeng emperor and were forced to acknowledge Cixi, on the strength of her being the mother of the new emperor with the status of Sage Mother Empress Dowager and this marked a shift of power. Prince Gong played the 'rectification of names' card and argued that during the infancy of the emperor when he was unable to be involved in matters of state and the military, the Empress Dowager should temporarily be permitted to act as regent (rule from behind the curtain) and that one or two advisers who are close to the imperial line be appointed. The reasoning appears to be quite adequate. The infant emperor could not leave the care of the Empresses Dowager, and by this time Cixi had successfully prompted Ci'an's misgivings about Sushun and the other regents. Family relationships were extremely important to the Manchus and Prince Gong, as the younger brother of the former emperor, should have become the most senior of the advisors, which prompted serious doubts about the legality of the eight-man regency under Sushun. The only card that Sushun and the others could play was the 'ancestral tradition' one, arguing that, 'this dynasty has never had a history of an Empress Dowager as regent'.

The antagonism within the autocratic system became the most important factor. After the withdrawal of the British and French forces from Beijing, Prince Gong, with the assistance of Baoyun and Wenxiang brought back order to the imperial capital and, with the Xianfeng emperor hiding in Rehe and unwilling to return, acquired extraordinary authority. At the time of Xianfeng's death he was excluded by Sushun's faction but had won the sympathy of much of the court and public opinion. The biography of Sushun in the *Qingshigao* analyses how the Sushun group lost out in the 1861 coup and concludes that it was almost certainly their failure to work with Prince Gong, which Cixi eventually used against them.

The twin palace regency was undoubtedly a milestone in Prince Gong's attempt to grasp power. The Sushun regency tried to reject this with edicts, on the grounds that the sacred ancestral rules of succession should be obeyed; that there was no precedent for an empress dowager to act as regent; and that on the emperor's deathbed they had been appointed personally by him. According to many interpretations of the 1861 coup, this actually spurred

Prince Gong to support Cixi in gaining the initiative arresting Sushun and the Princes Yi and Zheng in a surprise move.

Sushun and his supporters contested the legality of the regency by the empress dowagers on the grounds that it went against the 'ancient ancestral tradition' and plotted against them, almost certainly with people in the Manchu ruling house and the Eight Banners.

Therefore after the empresses dowager took the opportunity of accompanying the the emperor's funeral cortege to Beijing, Prince Gong directed Shengbao, Grand Secretary Zhou Zupei who had stayed in Beijing and others to speak out in favour of the regency of the empress dowagers. Shengbao exerted pressure on Sushun and other senior officials and persuaded sufficient of them that the regency of Cixi and Ci'an was both legitimate and necessary. Zhou Zupei produced documents claiming the the regency of eight appointed by the late emperor was not in line with the ancestral system of the Qing, saying it was only another name for the Grand Council and Sushun and his cronies had taken the opportunity to try to seize power and fool people into thinking they were acting on ancestral teachings. Zhou issued a proclamation adducing evidence of historical precedents for empress dowagers being involved in affairs of state between the Han and the Ming dynasties, and referred to the recent travails of the Qing dynasty linking the bandits of the Taiping who had tried to overthrow the Manchus with 'traitors' who had opposed the empresses dowager. Sushun and his group may never have seen this proclamation as on the following day, 29 September, the two empresses dowager issued special instructions to Prince Gong that he dismiss Zaiyuan, Duanhua and Sushun and bring them in for questioning. Prince Gong was confirmed as head of government and leader of the Grand Council one day later and within the week death sentences on Prince Yi Zaiyuan, Prince Cheng Duanhua had been decided in the interests of the state, but they were allowed to take their own lives. Sushun was publicly beheaded.

There were inauspicious factors that should have been seen as signs warning that the coup would be successful. None of the Manchu or Han elite, officials or people dare oppose the regency of the empresses dowager but Cixi was not satisfied with this. The regency was not a dictatorship and she had to contend with Ci'an, sitting to her right, and a group of leading officials. She craved the status of empress and was going to struggle to achieve it before her infant son, the Tongzhi emperor, attained his majority.

6 May 2009, at night.

ESSAY 76

Shengbao and Cixi

Cixi's 'rule from behind the curtain in 1862 (Tongzhi 2) was connected with the uproar over the Manchu general Shengbao. Shengbao was a Manchu of the Bordered White Bannner and the Gwagwa clan. According to his biography in the *Qingshigao* he passed the provincial level examination in 1840 (Daoguang 20) and followed the precedent of the sons of Manchu bannermen by serving as an official in the Imperial Academy for almost ten years and became principal of the Manchu college in the government university before rising to the post of Deputy Chancellor in the Grand Secretariat. In 1852 (Xianfeng 2) because of the Taiping rebellion he sent a memorial to the throne saying that the emperor had not been able to 'put the cares of the empire first' and was reduced in rank. He recommended himself to 'create a strategy to deal with the bandits' and was sent to Henan to assist in military matters, at which point he abandoned his civil service career in favour of a military one. He proved skilled at regarding mention of defeats as taboo and exaggerating victories and within a few years was designated an Imperial Commissioner. He was unable to halt the northward march of the Taiping armies that were closing in on Beijing, so his boasting was exposed and he was dismissed and punished by being transported to Xinjiang as an alternative to the death penalty. In 1856 (Xianfeng 6) he was pardoned and allowed to return and was then sent to Anhui to confront the Nian rebels where he adopted the tactic of persuading the rebels to surrender by bribing them, pretending that he had had a military victory; this was discovered and he was again stripped of his post and returned to Beijing.

His luck had still not run out as he arrived in Beijing just as the British and French forces were attacking the city; the emperor in a panic used the imperial guard unit of bannermen that Shengbao was leading to assist Senggerinchin and Duanlin in the resistance. Shengbao was injured by a stray shot early in the fighting and later used this to cover up the defeat which could be blamed on the other generals. When the Xianfeng emperor fled northwards, Senggerinchin and Duan lost their positions and Shengbao was made an Imperial Commissioner. Prince Gong, who remained behind in Beijing to negotiate peace terms, repeatedly said that of the three generals who took part in the defence of Beijing, only Shengbao was brave and resourceful. During Xianfeng's exile in Rehe, Shengbao rose to be commander of the Beijing garrision and became the dependable head of Prince Gong's Manchu army.

Shengbao was very arrogant. On the death of the Xianfeng emperor he was directing operations against the Nian rebels to the east of Beijing. He had clearly planned in advance with Prince Gong that he would arrive in Rehe the day after the funeral. He then submitted a memorial requesting that he be allowed to travel to Rehe to take instructions and discuss the southern campaign against the rebels with the eight regents who had been appointed by Xianfeng. He asked to be deployed to the east which would take him close to the eastern part of Zhili, not far from Rehe: it was not an area in which the Nian had previously been suppressed.

The *Qingshigao* records correspondence between Shengbao and Sushun that took place in November 1861 (Xianfeng 11) with Shengbao stating openly that he wished to pay his respects to the late Qing emperor, a pretext used by breakaway warlords with classical precedents in the Western Han and later periods of China's mediaeval history. Two hundred years after the foundation of the Manchu Qing empire, however, there was no such precedent. It is impossible to determine Shengbao's real intentions without seeing the original documents.

When Sushun and the other regents received Shengbao's memorial they issued an edict permitting Shengbao to 'pay his respects at the coffin of the emperor and then to proceed to the military encampment'. At the same time they issued a Grand Secretariat edict censuring Shengbao for errors in his roles of Imperial Commissioner and Assistant Secretary of the Board of War, which was sent with compliments by the secret communications system to the Empress Dowager, an indication that they were afraid of this powerful and hated representative of the Manchu military.

This put Shengbao in a difficult position and he had no option but to send another memorial acknowledging his errors. He had also had secret communications with Prince Gong and his visit to pay his respects in Rehe seems quite honest. However he had probably heard that Prince Gong and Cixi were secretly plotting to detain Sushun and the other regents, or at least had the political sensitivity to see the way the wind was blowing. When Cixi obstructed Sushun's intentions, Shengbao returned to Beijing while accompanying the emperor's coffin as he was laid to rest. In anticipation he sent a long memorial indicating his support for the regency of the two empresses dowager and pointing out what he believed to be problems with the suitability of some of the Rehe regents. It is not clear whether his memorial was prompted by Prince Gong, but he had both position and authority as a senior Manchu military official in charge of significant numbers of troops in the Beijing region. His public declaration of support for the seizure of power by Cixi and Prince Gong was a

deterrent to the conservative Manchu and Han elite who were in favour of the 'ancestral system'.

The 1861 coup could not have succeeded without the involvement of Shengbao, or perhaps it might have succeeded temporarily but not have been sustained in the long run.

As the traditional saying goes, Shengbao was a small man intoxicated by success and blinded by lust for gain. As a descendant of the lower class of Manchu bannermen he was looked down on by the elite of the Manchu ruling house. His rise in fame and fortune was not only because of his military prowess, as his early successes had not been reported honestly and he was despised for this by those in the know. During the 1861 coup he was arrogant because of the achievements he claimed and was not aware that in the eyes of Prince Gong and his colleagues he was a 'successful dog' and that once the rabbit had been killed the dog would be cooked. In the process of the 1861 coup, the honours awarded to him by Prince Gong were Lieutenant General of the Bordered Yellow Banner and Plain Blue Banner Guard Commander. For the remainder of his life he was a commander of the two armies and his status was high. He was immediately sent to oversee the suppression of the Nian, which he considered to be another great responsibility on behalf of the empire and used his official salary to bribe Nian leaders. One of the Nian chiefs, Miao Peilin, was more cunning than Shengbao, and after receiving great honours from him for guiding him to the lair of a Taiping king, he immediately turned his weapons on him and the problems was resolved with payment to relieve the hungry bandits. With the agreement of Cixi, Prince Gong gave orders that he was to be investigated. The first senior official sent to carry out the investigation was none other than Prince Senggerinchin whose command Shengbao had taken after the burning of the Old Summer Palace. Naturally Senggerinchin investigated Shengbao's crimes thoroughly. The government was concerned that Shengbao would do something desperate if he were cornered so he was transferred to Shaanxi to deal with the Nian in that province and Senggerinchin was secretly ordered to 'supervise' him. Dolonga also received a secret order to lead his troops to Shaanxi at the same time; he was told about Shengbao's crimes and instructed to relieve him of his command, bring him back to Beijing in custody and hand him over to the Board of Punishments. In 1863 at the highest court in Beijing Shengbao acknowledged the crime of 'bringing prostitutes into the barracks' and demanded that those who had falsely accused him of other offences be punished. However the tiger was in the cage and no one was going to open it.

Prince Gong and the two empresses dowager issued edicts in the name of the Tongzhi emperor, accusing Shengbao of 'corruption and deception as was widely known' and he was sentenced to death but permitted to commit suicide.

Shengbao had lived for forty years, the later half fighting to save the authority of the Manchu rulers. He was a contemptible individual grasping power with any trick that was necessary. He was dissipated and corrupt and gave bribes, used prostitutes and did much else besides. He was also an opportunist and gambled on the future direction of the powers that be. After he abandoned his civil service career in favour of a military one, his one idea in dealing with the Taiping and Nian rebels was to appease them and, when it was within his own power, avoid military conflict wherever possible. He was condemned for encouraging the rebels to surrender by bribing them but was it effective? The troubled regions were pacified and people who had not been able to earn a living were now able to. Therefore Shengbao's personal track record in 'suppressing rebels' at least avoided armed clashes. Appeasing the ordinary people who had become followers of bandits, treating them gently and alleviating the antagonism between them and the Qing court might have been the most sensible course.

It is said that after Shengbao was arrested, a former Nian army commander whom he had conciliated wanted to atone for his crimes in his position as a provincial governor, but the brother of an aide of Shengbao was then serving as a censor and could not avoid being suspicious. In a memorial he said that Shengbao had been successful in overcoming the enemy and dealing with bullies and was never guilty of losing territory or troops. Their criteria were different but their opinions similar, both considering that Shengbao had made a great contribution to the Qing dynasty, but this kind of historical defence does not really conform to the historical facts and circumstances. In any case it urged on Shengbao's death.

8 May 2009, in the early morning.

ESSAY 77

Shengbao Had to Die

Soon after the Shunzhi emperor had begun to rule in his own right he went to the Three Palace Academies, later called the Grand Secretariat, to review its history and entered into a dialogue with Manchu and Han Grand Secretaries, asking which of a list of emperors from the Han, Tang, Song and Ming dynasties they thought was the greatest. Chen Mingxia, a Ming official who had decided to work for the Qing, proposed the Tang emperor Taizong but the emperor contradicted him and pointed out that the first Ming emperor, Taizu, had enacted comprehensive legislation which lasted for a very long time so none of the others could compare with him. This record from 1653 (Shunzhi 10) is preserved by Jiang Liangqi in the *Records of the Eastern Flowery Gate* (*Donghualu*) and can be seen as the first instance of a Manchu emperor since the occupation of Beijing in 1644 praising the system of the founder of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, for setting the standard for Qing rule.

The main point of Ming Taizu's legislation was the concentration of power in the hands of the sovereign. In the later years of his Hongwu reign, he butchered officials with whom he had founded the Ming regime, using as an excuse a plot against him by his Grand Chancellor, Hu Weiyong, whom he believed was trying to usurp the throne. As many as fifteen thousand lesser officials who were considered to be implicated in the plot were killed and the emperor took the opportunity to do away with the entire system of ministers and rule as an autocrat.

However because of the democratic military tradition in the Manchu Eight Banners and the complicated challenges that arose in the Manchu conquest of China, for three generations up to the seizure of the throne by the Yongzheng emperor, this always counted as the realisation of the ancestral teachings. It was only the treacherous ruse of the Yongzheng emperor, Shizong, who first consipired to take control of the military power of the Han armies with the assistance of Lungkodo, who was related by marriage to the former Kangxi emperor, and the Chinese bannerman, Nian Gengyao, whose sister became a concubine of Yongzheng. He then proceeded to eliminate his brothers who had been contending for the throne and eventually had Lungkodo and Nian and other officials executed, so that political power was all in his hands. In these matters and especially in the way that Nian was treated it is possible to see the precedent for the way Cixi treated Shengbao.

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The death of Shengbao has been recounted in 'Shengbao and Cixi'. In the 1861 coup the Cixi and Prince Gong clique succeeded in a lightning attack on Sushun and the regents appointed by the late Xianfeng emperor and, if it had not been for Shengbao threatening Sushun's group with military force and their submission, the outcome would not have been certain. Sources that explain how this Great General met his death after the coup include the *Qingdai yeji* and *Qingshigao*.

The author of *Qingdai yeji*, Zhang Zuyi, was employed by Shengbao after the coup and served with him in Anhui, Henan and Shaanxi and his account of Shengbao in this book which was first published in 1914 is both long and detailed. Zhang says that Shengbao admired Nian Gengyao and hoped for a similar career, which is strange since Shengbao must have known how Nian was treated by the emperor and the only possible explanation was that he had decided that there was no danger; there was no longer a Yongzheng emperor; he was close to Prince Gong and the two empress dowager regents were of the weaker sex. He did have real power as Imperial Commissioner responsible for suppressing the Nian rebels and, apart from his original 15,000 troops, he had acquired at least another 15,000 from the Nian armies of Miao Peilin, Song Jingshi, Li Shizhong and other rebel commanders and from the Big Sword Society of Shandong which had changed sides. Although he understood military commanders he did not understand the imperial court and was extremely cocky; he was an Imperial Commissioner and superior to mere provincial governors. His seals were engraved with slogans illustrating his military prowess and he used red ink [normally reserved for the emperor] for his written instructions.

The greatest achievement of this 'Great General' in the early Tongzhi period was undoubtedly his capture of the Taiping king Chen Yicheng through the offices of Miao Peilin. Shengbao wanted to report this great success to the court so that he would be honoured when he arrived back in the capital but Zeng Guoquan [brother of Zeng Guofan] was first to announce to the court that the Nian army had been annihilated.

Shengbao was clearly unaware of the old saw about 'cooking the dog once the rabbit has been killed' and was expecting to be rewarded for his successes as officials had been by the Xianfeng emperor for their battles against the British at Baliqiao. He paid more attention to military orders than instructions from the emperor and assumed that because the empresses were female and the Tongzhi emperor was a child he was safe. These are among the reasons why he eventually met his death according to the account of his career in *Qingdai yeji*.

This analysis seems reasonable. Shengbao in bringing about the surrender of a Nian army and defeating Chen Yucheng's Taiping army gave Cixi an excuse to put into action a plan to 'lure the tiger out from the mountain' and she ordered Shengbao to lead his troops to Shaanxi to put down the Hui Muslim insurrection. Prince Gong knew of the plan and issued secret instructions through the Grand Council that, once Shengbao had arrived in Shaanxi, 'he was not to send any angry messages'. This transfer indicated to his political enemies that the situation had changed and in due course he was impeached. The Hunan governor who had been insulted by him accused him of being a Muslim, Nian and Cantonese bandit and of being responsible for great disasters and of not behaving like a proper official.

Shengbao did not heed the warning from Prince Gong and after arriving in Shaanxi he sent a memorial complaining that local officials would not work with him in getting supplies for his troops and other military matters which made his army less effective. When Cixi saw this she took the view that he was using the military for some ulterior purpose and that he 'did not have the heart of an official. She immediately despatched the Manchu officer Dolonga, who had made a name for himself with Senggerinchin, and his troops to Shaanxi and ordered him, when he found Shengbao unprepared, to detain him and bring him in custody to Beijing.

In the past I read a vermillion rescript from 1725 by the Yongzheng emperor to Nian Gengyao who had by then been demoted to the post of General in Hangzhou. This rescript indicates clearly that Yongzheng had doubts about the loyalty of Nian and subtly points to his subsequent execution. One hundred years later, Shengbao considered himself to be the General Nian of his day from the point of view of his status, military prowess and prestige among others, although he was only a crude imitation. He had no ambition to become emperor and there was never the possibility but, before Cixi had become an autocrat, she had deep suspicions that this was his intention, so he had to die.

The account of Shengbao in *Qingdai yeji* discusses whether he really deserved the punishment that was meted out to him, in view of the work that he had done to protect the empire. He had never lost territory or surrendered his troops and any offences that he had committed were private rather than public. Zeng Guofan's estimation of whether it was 'fair and just' is another matter, but he secretly sneered at Cixi's mentality as hardly any different from that of the Yongzheng emperor but it does throw light on her power and authority.

10 May 2009, at night.

ESSAY 78

Cixi Does Away with the Conventions of the Manchu Qing

The regency of the two empresses dowager which was formally established in 1862 (Tongzhi 1) and its rejection of the regents appointed by the Xianfeng emperor have already been discussed. The reasons for the resistance by the Sushun group were legitimate, arguing that the actions of the empresses dowager were illegal as they contravened the 'ancestral system' in which there had been no precedent in the earlier reigns of the Qing. However the empresses eventually became the victors and apart from Prince Gong were the ones who wielded political and military power in Beijing. Those who were surprised had clearly forgotten the history of similar conventions in previous Qing reigns.

Those conventions had already been pointed out frankly by Tang Xianzu the playwright of the Ming dynasty's Wanli period in his *Peony Pavillion* when he refers to 'ten thousand *li* of rivers and mountains and ten thousand *li* of dust, every new son of heaven brings his own courtiers'. The Qing followed Ming precedents and the early Qing emperors greatly esteemed the way that the first two Ming emperors, Zhu Yuanzhang and Zhu Di, took and held onto power. When the Qing Shunzhi emperor began to rule in his own right he overthrew the faction of the 'Emperor Father', the regent Dorgon and when the Kangxi emperor came of age he overthrew and imprisoned Oboi and his faction who had been designated a council of regents by the Shunzhi emperor. The Yongzheng emperor was even more brutal: 'Uncle Lungkodo' and Nian Gengyao on whom he had depended in his palace coup were both ousted and died. In the course of his literary inquisitions the Qianlong emperor got rid of those who were advising him to appoint an heir and refused to allow external officials to have any say in the business of the imperial family—this became an ancestral rule. The most recent example was the Jiaqing emperor who, while his father who had abdicated was lying in state, had Heshen, the court favourite of his father, arrested and executed [by being permitted to commit suicide]. It became one of the conventions of the dynasty, almost an unwritten law, that new emperors would use plots and violence to clear away the supporters of the previous regime. Sushun and his clique remained stubborn right to the end.

What is noteworthy is Cixi's ability to use conventions to smash conventions. The Manchus originated as a minority ethnic group on the northern frontiers

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of China and as early as the beginning of the Ming dynasty had abandoned the matriarchal social system but women still had the right to speak about aspects of production and livelihood and social intercourse was relatively open. Nurhachi and his son and grandson arranged alliances by marriage with Manchu and Mongol tribes to increase the strength of their empire and from this emerged the Aisin Gioro lineage; they prevented the involvement in politics of empresses and imperial concubines from any other lineages or tribes. Historians of the Qing like to say that there was no tradition of any involvement in politics by empresses but this turns the false into truth. When someone is ill they always talk about that illness. In the Manchu reigns of Shunzhi, Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong, there was a constant fear of empresses meddling in politics and of the competition for the affections of palace women and the gossip and intrigue that accompanied the intermarriage of Manchu, Mongol and Han banner families over the various reign periods.

Cixi belonged to the Manchu Bordered Blue Banner and on her mother's side to the Yehonala clan, but her father's branch had declined and when Cixi was selected for the imperial harem, she was initially assigned to the Old Summer Palace as a maid where she was visited by the emperor and promoted from concubine to consort and after providing the emperor with a son to *guifei*, the highest rank of imperial concubine. Some historians have noted that Sushun was the first generation descendant of the early Qing Bordered Blue Banner, Jirgalang Prince Cheng, and was therefore of the same banner as Cixi. Even after Cixi had risen in status as a concubine, he still despised her and her mother's branch of the same banner was also in decline.

It might be said that the humblest are the most intelligent although there may not be any historical statistics to prove this. Within the strictly stratified hierarchy of the Manchu banners, Cixi's rise in status from slave girl to the senior concubine suggest that, apart from her feminine charms, she was unusually adept at scheming and calculating. Modern biographers have noted the stories of how Cixi used her charms to fawn on her superiors, although some have to be taken as preposterous. There are some similarities, for example that in the two years before the Xianfeng emperor's death he had already begun to be concerned about Cixi's involvement in politics. This could explain why he did not promote the mother of his only son to the rank of imperial concubine before his death and did not promote her mother's family into a higher status banner (the Bordered Blue Banner was in the lower five banners and the leading banner in the upper three was directly under the jurisdiction of the emperor), as there is no other apparent reason.

Like other plotters who have risen by fair means or foul, Cixi understood very well how to use the power and influence of others to achieve her ends.

Originally she relied on her son and her charm as she cast her covetous gaze on the position on empress but the Xianfeng emperor saw through that and they drifted apart so she turned around and began to curry favour with the Niohuru family of the Empress Dowager Ci'an.

Ci'an's husband was the Xianfeng emperor and while he reigned she rose through the ranks of consorts and became Empress Dowager on his death. She was two years younger than Cixi and had been brought into the palace at a young age so all she knew was how to follow scrupulously the traditional ways of women and was not jealous of the palace women on whom Xianfeng doted and often advised him on matters of state as he respected her. According to *Qingdai yeshi* which was written by Zhang Zuyi who was familiar with palace and official sources in the late Qing, just before he died at the Rehe Palace the Xianfeng emperor sent a vermillion edict to Ci'an instructing her that if Cixi's son became emperor Cixi was not to be allowed to act against the ancestral traditions. Ci'an showed this to Cixi after the emperor's death. Cixi was obviously put down but turned her attention to involving Ci'an in dealing with the eight regents appointed by Xianfeng to handle affairs of state after his death. Ci'an was not aware that this was a stratagem and thus became the first person to be used in Cixi's plot. Before entering the palace, Cixi and her family had had many ups and downs and she had learned many tricks on how to survive. At an early stage in Beijing she had taken an interest in Prince Gong and through a close confidant, the eunuch An Dehai plotted to gain power behind the emperor's back.

Court officials who knew him well considered that Prince Gong was not very intelligent, but in the political battles in the Manchu court he was quite able in terms of his own rights and interests. Prince Gong had lost out to his brother in the succession to the Daoguang emperor but when the Xianfeng reign met with disaster and before the emperor fled to the Rehe he instructed Prince Gong to remain in Beijing to take charge of peace negotiations. However because British and French troops left Beijing after forcing the signature of a new round of unequal treaties his popularity rose and he became the real power at the heart of the empire.

In the Manchu 'ancestral system' in fact it was taboo for imperial princes to be involved in political affairs, the only exception being the conflict between the sons of Yongzheng when thirteen princes were at each others throats. After that the Jiaqing emperor employed his younger brother Prince Cheng as head of the Grand Council but he was dismissed after the downfall of Heshen and his faction. Zhang Zuyi's *Qingdai yeshi*, which has already been mentioned, notes Prince Gong's role as a senior official of the Grand Council.

As Prince Regent, Prince Gong was the same as the two empresses dowager in that none of them complied with the ancestral system established after the Shunzhi and Kangxi periods. Of course they departed from the tradition of individual despotism under Yongzheng and Qianlong. Cixi used Ci'an and Prince Gong as a cover to achieve her aim of personal dictatorship in what was effectively a transfer of power. She succeeded and in the end became the great untouchable dictator of the late Qing period. However, in the final analysis she failed because as she travelled towards dictatorship, the Great Qing Empire travelled towards extinction.

11 May 2009, at night.

ESSAY 79

Empress Cixi

In ancient China there were many examples of the wives and concubines of emperors having some political authority especially if they were the mothers of the imperial son and heir, and some were designated as 'queens' or 'empresses'. There were examples in the Han dynasty and Confucius discussed the propriety of the custom which can be summed up as 'the son takes the rank of his mother and the mother the rank of her son'. On the death of an emperor and the succession of the heir, the mother of the heir would be designated empress dowager and some involvement in political affairs became conventional. Later dynasties, especially those from the north frequently drew on this historical precedent.

After the Manchus came through the passes, the founder of the Qing dynasty, Nurhachi, who had forged links between the northern tribes through intermarriage, was constantly on guard against the interference of the families of wives and concubines in politics and this was transformed into a state policy under his descendants. In the six reigns from Shunzhi to the accession of Xianfeng, major or minor problems emerged in the role of officials and regents during transitions between reigns. The outcome was usually that emperors assumed autocratic powers after coups d'etat but there was no precedent for an empress dowager taking over the government.

It was Cixi who broke with the Manchu traditions of nine generations. Her distant ancestor, the chief of the Yehonala clan had sent one of his daughters to Nurhachi as part of the 'peace alliance' between the tribes and the tribe was inevitably swallowed up by Nurhachi and absorbed into the Bordered Blue Banner. However by the Daoguang and Xianfeng reigns of the Qing dynasty, this branch of the Yehonala or Nala tribe had long declined. In the biographies of empresses and imperial concubines in the *Qingshigao*, she was described as the daughter of Huizheng of the Chiguang circuit in Huining, Anhui. Huizheng was a bannerman but it is not known whether he acquired his official post by examination, connections or purchase but his responsibilities included taxation and defence; he achieved the official rank of grade 4 and was significant in his own area but was not a powerful figure and he did not have a title in the Manchu nobility. During the reign of Xianfeng when the internal conflict with the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom spread to southern Anhui, he was unable to defend his territory, was dismissed from his official position, became ill and died. Many contemporary records indicate that Cixi and her sisters went to

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Beijing with their mother's coffin. She was selected by the Xianfeng emperor to be a palace maid and this led to all kinds of rumours.

Her wishes were granted and she entered the palace service in 1851 at the age of 18 (she was born in November 1835) and was assigned to the Old Summer Palace. There are many stories about the way that she caught the eye of the young emperor and found her way into his bed, after which she had the title *guifei* indicating a first level concubine who was not from an aristocratic background; and Cixi's background was humble. She appears to have been adept at winning the favours of the emperor and was soon promoted to the fourth degree as Concubine Yi. The emperor wanted a son and heir and two of his concubines gave birth to sons at the same time. One boy died but Cixi's son, who was born in 1856, survived and was named Zaichun. The Yehonala concubine was transformed by this into the third level imperial consort. Xianfeng had not yet reached the age of thirty and could have had sons by other concubines. By 1861 Zaichun had attained the age of 7 *sui* [5 years old by Western calculation] and the emperor was incurably ill but he was not willing for the old convention of 'mother taking the status of the son' to be followed, in which Cixi would be promoted to Empress Dowager and her family transferred to a banner of higher status. This did not happen until the first year of the following Tongzhi reign.

That was not the only problem. According to unofficial histories of the Qing dynasty and contemporary rumours, during the last days of the Xianfeng emperor in Rehe what worried him most was that Cixi who was by his side would seize power after his death and usurp the throne. On the basis of a Han dynasty precedent he came to a secret understanding with Sushun, one of his closest confidants, that Cixi should be eliminated. It did not happen; whether this as a result of Xianfeng's weakness or because Sushun and his associates underestimated her as an enemy is not clear. There is one legend that rings true: Xianfeng sent a secret instruction written in his own hand to Ci'an, the gist of which was that if Cixi caused any trouble after his death she should be dealt with according to the 'ancestral laws of the family'.

Mediaeval autocratic regimes (whether ancient or modern, Chinese or foreign) inevitably seem to have experienced plots or military coups during the periods between reigns. As the Xianfeng emperor's concubine, Cixi launched an attack on the eight regents appointed by her late husband. She was able to do so for a number of reasons. She was 'a mother acquiring the status of her son' and had already risen to the rank of 'sage mother empress dowager'. She had also persuaded the other empress dowager, Ci'an to take a stand and force Xianfeng's eight regents to acknowledge their joint regency. Although the

power had shifted there were precedents that could be followed. The badly informed Sushun group had relinquished their control over the guard units of the Beijing area so that they had no forces available to counter a coup d'etat and were captured without putting up any resistance. Finally she took advantage of the feeling of crisis among senior officials during the transfer of imperial authority, put out rumours that if the Sushun group of regents took power there would be a purge at court and managed to involve members of the Beijing elite in violent criticism of the harm Sushun would cause the state while keeping him and the other regents in the dark.

Because Cixi was now in power, she managed to avoid the fate of the 'mother acquiring the status of her son' who has to be executed on the son's accession to the throne, which was common in autocratic East Asian regimes. This queen or emperor, who is usually called the Empress Dowager, Cixi was on the throne for 47 years and acquired a long list of honorific titles.

Fifty years ago when I first started reading about modern history and saw this long list of titles in the official records of the Qing dynasty, I gave a snort of contempt, believing this to be the toadying of shameless and sycophantic Manchu and Han literati and not worth considering. Later when I read *China under the Empress Dowager* by the British writers Bland and Backhouse, it still came as a great surprise to discover that the honorific titles in the late Qing were linked to economic benefits.

In fact each time the woman from the Yehonala clan received a two character increase in her honorific title, each character was worth 100,000 taels of silver. That is to say the treasury of the Manchu Qing regime acquired an extra 200,000 taels of silver each year, as a personal allowance for the Empress Dowager. She was given an extra two honorific characters by fawning courtiers every fifth and tenth birthday or if she pretended that she was going to hand over power to the young emperor. In this way, by the time she reached the age of 70 *sui*, her personal 'annual bonus' amounted to 1,600,000 taels of silver, and this does not include here daily expenses as Empress Dowager. It is said that after the allied armies occupied the royal palace and checked her private accounts, it was discovered that they contained more than 18,000,000 taels, making her the wealthiest ruler in the empire.

Under the terms of the Boxer Protocol of 1901, each and every one of the 400,000 Chinese people had to pay one *tael* of silver for this imperious and deceitful old woman who had incited the anti-foreign activities of the Boxers, to atone for her crimes at an additional cost of over 900,000 taels. She was also adding to her wealth in her later years with the honorific titles bestowed by sycophantic officials while increasing the tax burden on the whole

country. The new policies at the end of the Qing dynasty were criticised by knowledgable scholars on account of the fake constitution and fake reforms, while the person whose stratagem they were, the Empress Dowager Cixi, promoted a corrupt system of legitimised honours and bribery, while plundering the national treasury. The empire was corrupt from top to bottom and desperately in need of a remedy.

20 April 2009, in the early hours of the morning.

ESSAY 80

Who was Responsible for the Defeat in the 1894–5 War with Japan?

The final period of the Qing dynasty began after the death of the Xianfeng emperor on 22 August 1861 and ended with the revolt of the southern provinces against the Manchus and the provisional government of the Republic of China that was declared on 29 December 1911, a period of 49 years four months and seven days during which Cixi was the power at the heart of the empire.

The story of her rise through the ranks of the palace harem need not be repeated here except that she was determined that her son by the emperor would be the only one who could be selected as his heir. When the emperor was ill at the Rehe palace, his favoured courtier Sushun was plotting to ensue that she did not use the status of her son to take power, drawing on a precedent from the Han dynasty when the mother of the heir was executed. The emperor had also sent a secret communication to the other empress dowager, Ci'an, with instructions that Cixi was not to be allowed to cause trouble.

Eight regents were appointed by Xianfeng before his death, chosen from those officials who had fled to Rehe with him. Xianfeng had followed the advice of Sushun who was a stickler for respecting the clan system of the Manchus and when the emperor died the mother of the new emperor and the consort of the late emperor were both created empresses dowager. Cixi was 26 *sui* old and known to be extremely ambitious but the 'rules of the ancestral family' prohibited a consort from involvement in political matters. Nevertheless she took the opportunity of her son's minority to acquire power.

There is no evidence to show whether Cixi had read the works of Laozi and Han Feizi but she took a particular interest in the lives of powerful royal women from the Han dynasty to the Ming as models for her to emulate in achieving her objective. She was not a great reader, preferring opera, and had a lifelong indulgence in dramas based on the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and those from the Liao, Jin and Song periods with complex plots and conspiracies. Naturally she was most inspired by the characters of concubines in these plays.

After the Xianfeng emperor had breathed his last, Cixi behaved like the beautiful, strong but cruel Wang Xifeng in the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. She turned Ci'an against Sushun, colluded with Prince Gong and used the opportunity of the funeral arrangements for Xianfeng to divide the eight regents who

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had been appointed by him. The unsuspecting Sushun was arrested and sentenced to death and the whole gang of regents was rounded up.

Prince Gong had been involved in the humiliating treaties signed with the British, French, Russians and Americans and was the cause of the withdrawal of the invading troops from Beijing to Tianjin. He had never rejected Sushun's policy of placing Han Chinese officials in senior positions and the Taiping rebellion was defeated by the Hunan and Huai armies mustered and led by Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang and Li Hongzhang. Cixi made sure that her relative Prince Gong was on her side and through him reconstructed the government in Beijing, thus ensuring the temporary stability of domestic politics in what has become known as the Tongzhi Restoration.

The Tongzhi emperor, Zaichun aged six *sui*, was the eighth monarch of the Manchu Qing dynasty and was on the throne for thirteen years, dying of syphilis at the age of 19 on 12 January 1875. There are records of his dissipation while on the throne but society seemed to have emerged from turmoil into a period of stability.

Confucian scholars in mediaeval China had an unshakeable idea that chaos was abnormal and that stability, however it was achieved, should be praised, summed up in the phrase, 'rather dogs at peace than humans driven apart by war'.

The Tongzhi emperor ascended the throne on the death of Xianfeng: within three years the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom had been wiped out and the Nian rebels were eradicated after that and with Zuo Zongtang's western expediton, Qing control of the western and northern borders was assured, leading to the establishment of a provincial administration in Xinjiang. The plans of the Russians and British to carve up China suffered a reversal so, from the point of view of foreign relations, and the Qing court's support for the Hunan army in the recovery of imperial authority in the northwest, it could be termed a 'Tongzhi Restoration'.

As for domestic matters there is no doubt that the Tongzhi Restoration marked a temporary stabilisation, initially with the defeat of the Taipings by the local warlords of the Hunan and Huai armies and then embodied in the provincial governors of the south who were similar to Han or Tang dynasty feudal military commissioners. The appearance of history does not necessarily equate to the reality and striving to restore the reality of history does not necessarily mean revealing the essence of history.

The 'Tongzhi Restoration' was the title of a highly praised book by the American scholar Mary C. Wright (1917–70) that appeared in 1957 and was published in a Chinese translation in the new century. She examined the influence

of traditional Confucian scholars on China's modernisation to demonstrate that what was driving the 'Tongzhi Restoration' from the inside was Confucian culture. This theory is worth further research by historians of the politics of the late Qing, especially the conclusion in which she points out that the failure of the restoration clearly demonstrates that there was no way of placing an effective modern state on top of a Confucian society.

This is useful advice from an outsider but one problem is whether Mary C. Wright's description of late Qing China as a 'Confucian society' is historically accurate. Scholars who follow the teachings that it was a 'semi-colonial, semi-feudal society' will not agree but even those who maintain that New Confucians were able to open up a Chinese-style modernisation cannot completely reject this theory. This is not the place to go into her book in great detail; it should be read in its entirety, but it is worth noting that she pays a great deal of attention to the Manchu Qing political situation in the years of the 'restoration' but she appears to have less familiarity with the power shifts in the empire and it is very significant that in the book the glorious name of Cixi is hardly mentioned.

Cixi was originally a member of the Manchu Bordered Blue Banner but on the accession of her son and her promotion to Empress Dowager, her family was transferred to the Bordered Yellow Banner. Although she became a member of the first imperial banner she was not fluent in spoken Manchu and could not read the Manchu script. Her level of competence in Chinese language and culture can be assessed from the fact that, from her entry into palace service there are many stories of her assisting the Xianfeng emperor to reply to memorials, an indication that she was at least literate. The only source to indicate that she had been educated in traditional culture is *Zhiping baojian* [compiled by the imperial tutor Zhang Zhiwan with the assistance of other court officials] that she read with the other empress dowager, Ci'an, in 1862.

According to the *Supplementary Records of the Eastern Flowery Gate* (*Donghua xulu*), the *Zhiping baojian* [*Precious Mirror for ruling and pacifying*] was compiled in 1861, the first year of the Tongzhi reign. Its contents included material on the politics of historical emperors but concentrated on positive examples of previous regencies by empresses: it was in manuscript form and never printed. It became one of the textbooks for educating the two empress dowagers. Apparently Cixi played the leading role in studying what was a political text specialising in the regencies of empress dowagers. In November 1865 (Tongzhi 4), when Weng Tonghe expounded on the *Zhiping baojian* to the empresses dowagers, he was the seventh person that year to have lectured to them on the topic. Weng's diary shows that these expositions were given three times a month and that each lasted about half an hour, or longer if the

empresses dowager wished. His lecture on that occasion dealt with examples of regencies in the Song and Ming dynasties.

In fact Cixi was quite ignorant about history and was not even very clear about how long the Ming dynasty had lasted. She occasionally asked whether a particular emperor was 'virtuous', as if asking whether a character in an opera was good or bad. On another occasion Weng lectured on the rise of eunuch power at the end of the Ming dynasty, 'citing ancient and modern texts' and the more sincere he was the harsher Cixi felt it was. In spite of the scandal involving the eunuch An Dehai, of whom she was particularly fond, she did not see history as a mirror—it had not been the custom of the Manchu Qing autocracy.

The *Zhiping baojian* was thus a textbook specifically for the regency for Cixi and Ci'an. Weng Tonghe was handed a copy only the day before he had to lecture on it. There are no details of the authors in the art and literature section of the Qingshigao and it may never have been published. It was the only source of information for Cixi's education on the imperial art of ruling and, according to Weng's diary, she was only interested in about half of this superficial tome, notably the sections involving mothers, sons and intrigues. Cixi was constantly involved in palace intrigues and coups and, after the twin regency became government by the instructions of a single individual, she squeezed out any life still remaining in the empire and after the record of losing her capital twice that she had created with her late husband, she transformed herself into a puppet for a 'court for foreigners', which would lead to disaster and the extinction of the dynasty. The half of the *Zhiping baojian* that she had studied clearly had an influence on the imperial arts of ruling that she used as a despot but this needs further research.

The Qing court declared war on Japan on 1 August 1894, as the previous day the Japanese Foreign Ministry had announced that a state of war existed between the two countries. In fact the week before Japanese naval vessels had launched a surprise attack on Chinese military transport ships assisting Korea and these were really the first shots exchanged in the war.

Documents and records of both sides about the causes, course and outcome of the war and reports from eyewitnesses of other nations are confused and varied, reflecting the complex history between the countries involved. However the main criminals were the Japanese military and political authorities who incessantly schemed to bring about war. As a result of this war, China lost Taiwan, part of its territory, and was forced to acknowledge that Korea belonged to Japan and make a payment of reparations to the Japanese invaders, amounting to 200,000,000 silver *taels*; in order to redeem the Liaodong

Peninsula, the birthplace of the Manchu people, another 3,000,000 was paid. Japan went on to become the greatest upstart of the 19th century, using the blood and sweat of the Chinese people to achieve its 'modernisation' and in the 20th century became one of the creators of carnage in Asia and globally.

The Great Qing empire had experienced defeat in two Opium Wars and the war with France but, after the suppression of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the Nian rebels, the domestic situation appeared to be relatively stable. This stability was an illusion as when Chinese and Japanese forces clashed, the outcome was that the Manchu Qing in the end were defeated by Japan which had been the pupil of China for a thousand years. This led to a deep humiliation that had not been experienced since it had resisted Japanese pirates three hundred years previously in the Ming dynasty. Therefore in the Battle of the Yellow Sea in 1894 (Guangxu 20), after the comprehensive destruction of the Beiyang Fleet, it was hardly surprising that the anger of the country was aroused.

The reason for the indignation was that on 27 April 1895, (Guangxu 21) the high official Li Hongzhang, was empowered by the court to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki with the Japanese Prime Minister, Ito Hirobumi and bring the war to a conclusion.

By the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Qing court lost territory and had to pay an indemnity at a level that was unprecedented since the Treaty of Nanjing between Britain and the Qing dynasty half a century previously. The news spread to Beijing where special examinations were being held in honour of the 60th birthday of the Empress Dowager. Gathered together in the capital were graduates of the provincial level examinations from the eighteen provinces, and Kang Youwei from Guangdong, Liang Qichao and other leading lights issued a 'Candidates Petition', which had three main demands: that the peace treaty be rejected, the capital transferred inland and that there should be institutional reform. This was the first student movement that had occurred in Beijing in the 250 years since the foundation of the Qing state. Its influence on the political situation at that time was not as large as some modern historians imagine, but it did signify that the cream of Chinese culture had lost hope in the Qing court and were full of indignation. In the 1898 reforms that emerged three years later, it was this generation that took centre stage.

A century after the Sino-Japanese War, researchers in China and abroad have produced a vast collection of books, but apart from those writers who spared no effort to speak in defence of Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang and others who initiated the Foreign Matters Movement, most consider tht Li Hongzhang

should be held responsible for the defeat by Japan. Few point out that he was really a scapegoat for the entire rotten system of the Manchu Qing empire.

In the official histories and private opinions on the Sino-Japanese war, there is one person who was the main authority behind the defeat but has received the least attention from Chinese or foreign writers. That person was the Empress Dowager, Cixi.

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The Empire Terminated by Cixi

Imperial Ambition

Cixi was born in 1835. On the 60th anniversary of her birth, according to the traditional Chinese lunar calendar, 7 November 1894 by Western reckoning, the Sino-Japanese War broke out. By then she had acted as regent twice and in 1889 (Guangxu 15) had celebrated her 'retirement from government' and the end of her regency as Empress Dowager, the 'beginning of a new cycle of sixty years'.

This was a major event for the Qing state. The Manchu emperors had always emphasised both the elements of 'nation' and 'family' that combine to form the Chinese word for 'state'. Emperors since Kangxi invariably praised excessively the concept of 'filial rule' for fear that officials and the populace might not realise just how filial the emperors and empresses were.

However as far as Cixi was concerned, it is a great pity that she was the only concubine of her late husband, the Xianfeng emperor. Although she was honoured as the 'Sage Mother Empress Dowager', during the Tongzhi and Guanxu reigns, her status was below that of the 'Imperial Mother Empress Dowager' Ci'an, the widow [former imperial consort] of Xianfeng. In the third year of the Tongzhi reign, 1864, when she was thirty, the court did not organise any ceremonial birthday celebrations for her, whereas in the following year there was great pomp and ceremony for Ci'an's thirtieth birthday [by traditional Chinese reckoning]. When Cixi was forty in 1874, the Tongzhi emperor died and she colluded with Ci'an to have the four year old son of Prince Chun designated as the heir to the throne. This was a contravention of the rules of the Manchu ancestral system as it replaced father to son succession with succession from older to younger brother. This sparked of a great uproar at the Qing court so that even the celebrations for Ci'an's fortieth birthday were left out in the cold. For several years there was confusion and the problem of succession faded out and then in 1881 (Guangxu 7) Ci'an died. There is a story that after having eaten pastries sent to her by Cixi she collapsed and never revived.

That year Cixi was 47 *sui*. For twenty years she had frequently shown herself to be capable of playing power games. As a young widow, abnormally sexually repressed, she had a tendency towards sadism: if this had been confined to her family, allowances could have been made but there was no real separation of the political environment from family life and early on when she had removed

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the powers of a regent from Prince Gong, she took advantage of Ci'an's weakness and lack of awareness to handle affairs of state in an increasingly brutal and stubbornly biased manner. Up to the death of Ci'an she became more and more unrestrained and as her reputation might have predicted, she turned into the first female dictator of the Manchu Qing dynasty.

There is no need to repeat here the history of internal and foreign affairs that exposes Cixi's autocratic nature but it is worth mentioning *Jindai Zhongguo shishi rizhi* by Guo Tingyi which is informative on Cixi's activities around 1881 when the Qing empire was surrounded on all sides by the Russian, British, French, Japanese, German and American and in a perilous position. Throughout the empire the power structure was universally corrupt from top to bottom and its future was extremely uncertain.

In 1861 (Xianfeng 11), according to palace records, the Tongzhi emperor was ceremonially enthroned on the day before Cixi's 26th birthday. The banquet that was provided for her by the imperial kitchen included 26 kinds of dim sum, and four main dishes, arranged in the four characters that mean 'a long and happy life'. It was said that this banquet marked the point at which she acquired the taste of being an empress. As the Western Empress Dowager in the joint regency she had played second fiddle to Ci'an, out of consideration for the ancestral system, and her birthday had not been celebrated officially. After the death of Ci'an no one in the Manchu Qing elite dared to challenge her autocratic authority and her birthday was designated as the 'festival of ten thousand years', on the same level as that of an emperor and she publicly received the congratulations of Manchu and Han nobles and high officials.

Her 'Fiftieth Official Birthday'

It is often said that the situation is more powerful than the individual. Cixi's 'fiftieth official birthday' fell in 1884 (Guangxu 10) as the conflict between the French and the Qing was becoming increasingly violent. France had occupied Yunnan and was threatening to attack Fujian and Taiwan. However in March of that year, as reports of defeats were transmitted from the front, Prince Gong in his capacity as a senior official of the Grand Council implored Cixi to follow the advice of Prince Dun, the Presiding Controller of the Imperial Clan Court, that on her November birthday invitations to attend the celebrations should be issued widely both inside and outside the court. Cixi had for some time been angry with Prince Gong for obstructing her 'project' of renovating the three lakes of the Old Summer Palace and she took the opportunity to show her annoyance, arguing that the renovations were necessary if provincial officials

were visiting and glossed over the fact that there was a hole in the finances of the state and that naval defences were a façade. She then suddenly announced that the entire Grand Council was to be recalled, expelled Prince Gong and other elder statesmen from the government and ordered her brother-in-law, Prince Chun, to take control of the Grand Council.

The facts provide evidence of how cunning Cixi was. She had transformed the officials of the Grand Council into obedient lackeys and this gave others a taste of what they were in for in her intrigues. She was fully aware that Zhang Peilun and Chen Baochen who were the 'clear stream' or 'purist' faction officials advocating war against the French really knew nothing about military affairs so she sent them to the front line of naval defences to take charge of the war. As a result of this in the battle of Fuzhou in July of that year the Qing Southern Fleet was wiped out and Taiwan was in imminent danger. The Japanese were also stirring up trouble in Korea. Cixi, however, in spite of the political chaos, appeared to be satisfied with getting rid of two of the 'clear stream' officials and celebrating her fiftieth official birthday in October and November. According to the records of Weng Tonghe, the President of the Board of Revenue, the celebrations cost 600,000 taels of silver, with extra costs for performances of opera and lights and decorations for the stage adding another 10,000 taels.

Did Cixi not acknowledge that 'there was a hole in the finances of the state and that naval defences were a façade'? This was a case of the words concealing her astuteness. After the fall of Prince Gong, with which Cixi rid herself of the Manchu aristocrat who sought to control her lifestyle of unrestrained spending, she had rebuilt the Haohua Gardens that had been given to her for leisure purposes and the cost of this increased daily. She then decided to rebuild the Western Gardens which were later known as the Yiheyuan Summer Palace. The cost of these renovations, at a time when heavy losses were being sustained in battle and China did not have a navy capable of facing the 'Western barbarians', was constantly raised inside and outside the court. Prince Chun who was in charge of the government did all he could to commend Li Hongzhang's proposal that China buy foreign vessels to build a navy. Unexpectedly Cixi ratified this but afterwards it was discovered that she had found a way of profiting from it, by borrowing the 'services rendered' by Manchu and Han noble and high officials, wealthy merchants and powerful literati, exporting the money to various foreign banks and using the misappropriated funds to rebuild the Summer Palace. Prince Chun was from a Manchu bondservant background and Li Hongzhang had been attacked for the way he had managed the 'foreign matters' movement. The funds contributed for the navy had been borrowed, and half of then had been used for the rebuilding of the Summer Palace, a total it is said of 22,000,000 taels of silver. Weng Tonghe who was in charge

of the finances of the empire at that time knew very well that this was the expenditure intended for the construction of a navy, but to satisfy Cixi's avarice by substituting one thing for another got together with another imperial tutor, Li Hongcao, and while complying with Cixi's instructions checked Li Hongzhang's policy of avoiding direct confrontation with Japan.

Therefore in 1894 (Guangxu 20) the Qing army and navy were repeatedly defeated in battle with the Japanese. This led to the sinking of the entire Beiyang Fleet. This has been blamed on Li Hongzhang by Chinese and foreign writers but the main culprit must have been Cixi.

The Travels of Lao Can *and Cixi*

Public opinion about Cixi can be seen in the novel *Travels of Lao Can* (*Lao Can youji*) that was published at the end of the Qing dynasty in 1906 (Guangxu 22) under the pseudonym of, Hongdu bailiansheng. It is clear from the introduction that the author is Liu E, whose style is Liu Tieyun and that he is from Dantu in Jiangsu province; he had acquired an appointment as sub-prefect by purchase, was skilled in the management of waterways and was promoted to the prefect. He came into contact with Westerners through his promotion of the development of railways and mines and in 1900, during the Boxer wars, hurried to Beijing where he bought rice from granaries that were controlled by Russian military invaders and distributed it to the poor of Beijing. When Cixi returned to the capital he was ordered by Yuan Shikai to be investigated and prosecuted and as a 'Han traitor' was exiled to Xinjiang where he died in 1910.

Lu Xun and Hu Shi both considered *The Travels of Lao Can* to be a worthy novel. In chapter 11 Lao Can presents a conversation between two of his characters Yellow Dragon (Huang Longzi) and Shen Ziping which discusses the significance of the traditional 60 year cycle and *inter alia* includes prophecies about the Boxers in northern China and revolutionary movements in the south [although these events had occurred by the time the book was written.

According to calculations using the 60 year cycle, the annihilation of the Taipings and the resurgence of the Qing regime in 1864 (Tongzhi 3) marked the dynasty's entrance into a new cycle of 60 years. This is of course the mysticism of historical cycles but that does not mean that it is irrelevant to the understanding of the dictatorship of Cixi at the time that *The Travels of Lao Can* was written.

Mediaeval history does not lack examples of empresses dowager taking power and there have been female monarchs. However the phenomenon of

the joint regency between Cixi and Ci'an in the Tongzhi restoration, Cixi suppressing her rival and the emergence of a despotic female monarch is unprecedented in Chinese history.

The reasons are undoubtedly complex but one thing is beyond doubt, that Cixi exploited ever loophole in the Manchu monarchical system. Scholars of the Qing dynasty generally approve of the system of the secret designation of an heir that was established by the Yongzheng emperor on the grounds that it put an end to fratricidal political strife among the princes. However Yongzheng's scheme had unexpected problems: one was that the emperor on the throne could only transmit the throne to the son so there was no other choice of heir; another was when the emperor died without issue. Unfortunately these occurred in the transition from the Xianfeng to the Tongzhi reign. Even more unfortunate was the fact that, in contravention of all the taboos of the long line of Qing emperors, a concubine of the late emperor and her family rose to power.

The Travels of Lao Can was drafted in 1904 (Guangxu 30). The author, Liu E was eight *sui* in 1864 (Tongzhi 3) so much of what he describes is based on his own observations. He mentions the complete changes in the previous sixty years of the traditional cycle and at least half of the current events came from his own experience. This includes the Boxer Rebellion, the Empress Dowager Cixi's retirement form the regency to the Sino-Japanese War. He concludes that Cixi's xenophobia was not genuine but her suppression of the Han Chinese was. He also touches on the southern revolution that arose as a result of the suppression of the 1898 Reform Movement, the reforms to the official and examination system that were brought in afterwards and the revolutionary parties that 'used ideology to drive out the Manchus'. He considers both the Boxers in the north and the revolutionaries in the south to be causing chaos but also acknowledged that institutional reform has come about because of their actions, which is an interesting point of view.

The theories about the 60 year cycle in chapter 11 of The Travels of Lao Can have been interpreted differently by historians of novels over the years. Some say that it indicates the harmonisation of the three teachings [Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism] in his thought; others argue that it shows Liu E's wish for reform but not revolution. In any case in the three late Qing dynasty reigns of Xianfeng, Tongzhi and Guangxu, the process by which Cixi violated all the conventions of the Manchu Qing ancestral system and rose to such a position of political power provide some contrast and Liu E's personal experiences must also be part of the explanation. Liu E's historical viewpoint at least included an interest in reform and reform in stages so that the more reform there was

the nearer would be a 'civilised and solid age'. Thus it is possible to see that although his historical viewpoint favours the cyclical approach, and has the concentrated fragrance of mysticism, it is not necessarily more a historical than other accounts of the quintessence of China and its culture.

All *jia* Days in the Traditional Calendar are Unfavourable

In the book *Emperors of the Qing dynasty*, the Taiwanese historical short story writer Gao Yang mocks the empress dowager by noting that the years in the traditional sixty year cycle that began with the character *jia* [and thus the anniversaries of her birth] were all associated with disasters or problems. In 1864 the Taiping rebellion was crushed but after that the *jia* years were all unfavourable. In 1874 (Tongzhi 13) she was 40, her only son died young and the imperial line of succession was broken; in 1884 (Guangxu 10) she was 50 and China was at war with France; in 1894 (Guangxu 20) she was sixty and China was at war with Japan; in 1904 (Guangxu 30) she celebrate her 70th birthday but it was a year of severe floods.

History books are supposed to deal with real people and novels with fictional characters but historians are rather uncomfortable with this. In Gao Yang's historical novel what he has to say about the lives of real people in the late Qing period is clearly based on textual research and it is difficult to deny that his meticulous approach is better than that of some mainstream historians this side of the Taiwan Strait. The 47 year rise of Cixi from concubine to untouchable despot as described in a lively way in *Emperors of the Qing dynasty* is well worth reading.

Gao Yang's summary of the unfavourable *jia* days does not however make any reference to Liu E's *The Travels of Lao Can*, which was published 80 years previously and which he must have read. Both of them deal with mysticism, the unknowable and numerology, but a key lesson is that human affairs cannot be reduced to a single number and are based on the past, a product of history.

The Upstart Cixi

Let us returning to the point about Cixi and inauspicious years.

In 1861, ten days after the coup, Cixi was honoured with the title of 'Sage Mother Empress Dowager, but on her thirtieth and fortieth birthdays, celebrations were restricted to the court because of the presence of the empress

dowager, Ci'an. After the death of Ci'an and the ousting of Prince Gong, by 1884 she was functioning as the sole regent and on her fiftieth birthday there was universal celebration. Prince Gong was dismissed from all his posts after defeats by the French in Vietnam and she used the occasion of her birthday in October to dismiss the entire Grand Council, concentrating power into her own hands at the head of a government of lackeys. She even refused to allow Prince Gong to enter the palace to pay homage to her but she did squander 600,000 silver taels on the celebrations. The opera in the palace was lively but she appeared disappointed.

Therefore in 1893 at the beginning of the first month of the lunar year (Guangxu 19), the Qing court issued an edict ordering officials of central government and the governors and governors-general of the provinces to prepare a grand celebration for her 60th birthday. She issued her own edict arguing that it was difficult to go against the boundless hospitality of the emperor and senior Manchu and Han officials, so agreed that celebrations could be held to mark her sixtieth birthday but that they should be managed with frugality. Cixi's edict was a model. From the *Records of the Eastern Flowery Gate—Guangxu reign*, it can be seen that from the early spring of 1894 (Guangxu 20) imperial edicts followed the pattern of this model. They honoured the Manchu and Han high official while condescending to allow the populace to contribute silver, none of whom were left out. The officials and people of the entire nation on whom she bestowed her favours had to pay to show their solicitude for her and pay again for presents to demonstrate who was most loyal to her.

The evaluation of the people is not however as that of Heaven. When the whole country was congratulating Cixi, China's neighbour to the east, Japan, was rattling its sabres, sending troops to Korea because of disturbances there and attempting to replace the Manchu Qing as Korea's suzerain. The Qing court was divided into a war and a peace faction and all eyes were on Cixi to see whether her expression indicated that there should be war with Japan.

Cixi had the mentality of an upstart: she came from a humble background and by a combination of circumstances had become one of the 'mothers of the nation' and then the only Empress Dowager. She had no knowledge of China's relations with foreign countries and even less of the rise of Japan. She still resented the fact that the 'French barbarians' had ruined her 50th birthday celebrations and as soon as she heard that the 'Japanese dwarves' were taking the opportunity of causing trouble on her 60th, her first response was that there should be war, 'otherwise China would lose face'. Since she identified herself with China it would be her 'face' that would be lost in dealing with the 'dwarf pirates' and such a humiliation was unacceptable.

The mentality of an upstart is always manifested in great ups and downs. In 1894 the Japanese invaded China and Cixi's anger was aroused. To 'save face' she sent Weng Tonghe to Tianjin to compel Li Hongzhang, the head of the Beiyang Army, to meet the challenge of the enemy. As it happened both the army and the navy were routed and Cixi 'lost face'. She immediately changed track and insisted on peace, ordering Li Hongzhang to sign on her behalf the Treaty of Shimonoseki with the Japanese, an unprecedented national humiliation. However her greatest regret was that defeat by Japan ruined her sixtieth birthday celebrations.

In the past there was criticism of 'Chen Shubao's complete lack of conscience'. This last emperor of the Southern Dynasties was not as brazen as Cixi in the rout by Japan of China in the war of 1894–5. Chen Shubao suffered a military defeat and was taken prisoner and sought a speedy death by drinking himself into oblivion. However Cixi did not care about the cession of Taiwan, the loss of the Liaodong Peninsula or the 23 million taels of reparations that created a new record for national humiliation since the Opium Wars; she still borrowed vast amounts of money for her sixtieth birthday. This made the imperial tutor Weng Tonghe extremely uneasy and on the eve of the birthday he asked the Grand Minister Supervisor of the Imperial Household Department, Lishan, to levy a tax on his behalf to cover the expenses. After the defeat of the army and the navy by the Japanese, Cixi was forced to change the arrangements for the ceremonials, which were originally to have been held at the Summer Palace, and move them to the Imperial Palace. The original tax for contributions to the celebrations which had been forbidden was suddenly revived on the eve of the party and nobles and senior officials rushed to contribute. The nation was in dire peril but Cixi still borrowed millions and this is a clear indication that corruption had penetrated the very marrow of the empire.

Historians of the late Qing tend to blame China's defeat in the war with Japan on Li Hongzhang because of his previous advocacy of a peaceful settlement. Because of his roles as leader of the Huai Army and the Beiyang Fleet, Governor-General of Zhili and the senior official responsible for the northern coastline, Li Hongzhang cannot escape blame during the conflict, but he was not the main culprit. After the Hunan and Huai armies had suppressed the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and then the Nian rebels, the Qing court was obliged to acknowledge the actual strength of their military forces, but their authority to assist in reviving the fortunes of the state was limited as they had become prisoners of the imperial system and in reality had become the lackeys or hired thugs of the system.

Cixi and the Collapse of the Empire

The narrative of the Sino-Japanese War need not be repeated here. The modernisation of the Qing and Japanese navies began at almost the same time. The vessels and the officer training of both navies were modelled on those of Western European countries. However after 20 years of competing, in the face of the Qing court that was continually directing military operations, Li Hongzhang tried hard to avert a trial of strength with the Japanese navy. His reasoning was that the Beiyang Fleet was obsolete and was not a match for its Japanese opposite numbers. This was cowardice in the face of the enemy but it was also a fact because the funding for the Chinese navy had been expropriated for the rebuilding of the Yiheyuan Summer Palace for the leisure activities of the Empress Dowager, Cixi. The imperial tutor Weng Tonghe, who was in charge of finances, enjoyed Cixi's support as he restrained the navy from making additional purchases of munitions. The result was that when, before the war with Japan, the Beiyang Fleet requested the purchase of twelve extra rapid firing guns from the German firm Krupps for its capital ships they were told that the funding priority was Cixi's 60th birthday.

This indicates clearly that while corruption in Li Hongzhang's Huai army and the backwardness of the navy were directly responsible for all the Chinese land and sea defeats in the war with Japan, the more fundamental reason was the Manchu Qing autocratic system which was rotten through from top to bottom. The Empress Dowager sat at the pinnacle of this system, hogging all power, plotting, scheming, extravagant and ignorant. Since 1884 she had been the invincible empress or posed as such, but her talent was solely for the tricks of palace politics. For example although she announced that she was 'returning the government' to the Guangxu emperor, in practice she placed him under even stricter control. Everytime Guangxu went to the Summer Palace to pay his respects, unless he gave Li Lianying, the head of the eunuchs 50 *taels* of silver they would not even tell the empress that he was outside waiting for an audience. Even the access of the emperor to his favourite concubines was controlled by Cixi. The 'returning of the government' to Guangxu was just another clumsy facade for her dictatorship.

After the defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, when the Japanese forced the Qing court to sign the provisional Treaty of Shimonoseki, Cixi feigned illness and refused to meet any government officials, demanding instead that the puppet Guangxu emperor go out to try to do something to restore this unprecedented humiliating defeat. The Manchu empire did still have some capital that it could use, the power of the people that was embodied in the public

declaration made in Beijing by examination candidates including Kang Youwei who was regarded as the leader of those demanding reform. The Guangxu emperor, although under the influence of Cixi, was young and impetuous and made it clear that he did not want to be the monarch of a doomed empire. The Reform Movement lasted only for one hundred and three days when at a word from Cixi it was ended and the protagonists were arrested.

When historians of the late Qing look back at the Hundred Days Reform Movement, most consider it to have been a critical juncture that could have been a lifesaver for the Manchu Qing dynasty. Cixi strangled the Reform Movement and afterwards excluded the Guangxu emperor from power as he encountered internal and external opposition. She supported the faction of the Manchu nobles who wished to use the Boxers to suppress the Han on the pretext of throwing out the foreigners. However as the allied armies approached the capital she felt obliged to flee Beijing, disguised as a country woman, abandoning the capital again to the 'Western barbarians' as she and her late husband the Xianfeng emperor had done in 1860. By 1900 the Qing dynasty might have existed in name but it was effectively extinguished. The Sino-Japanese war marked the point at which Cixi began to lose her dictatorial powers; afterwards the Great Qing empire that she controlled was terminally and incurably ill and Cixi herself had become a corpse, perishing at the same time as the empire.

Postscript

Over half of the eighty or so short pieces collected in this volume have appeared on the Chinese website of the British newspaper, the *Financial Times*; the rest are published for the first time here. One day three years ago an editor of the Chinese edition, Miss Xue Li, called on me at my office and invited me to contribute a column to this website. I was surprised as I had never used the web and neither had I written using a computer, so how could I write a column on the web? However because of the sincerity of the editor I agreed to try, asking only that I did not have to provide copy at fixed times and that the content would be restricted to history. We had a gentleman's agreement, rather than a written contract, and this stipulated that either side could discontinue the arrangement if they so wished.

I wrote a number of pieces of around two thousand characters, under the provisional general title of 'Rereading Modern History'. The FT Chinese Web published one item each week so I was obliged to write at this speed. Before long a new editor, Gao Song, took over and was even better at pressing for copy via email, which meant that I had to spend at least two nights a week writing pieces and this became a worry. I could not avoid thinking about a saying of Lu Xun's, 'the beggar fears the dog's bite, the scholar fears the examinations', but although I am not an aspiring examination candidate writer I should be able to deal with this weekly examination.

I am already past the age at which Confucius met Duke Zhou, but I have undertaken many responsibilities in teaching and writing, so I can no longer shoulder the responsibility of spending two days each week worshipping the 'gods' of the FT Chinese Web, that is the readers. I have not yet had the honour of making the acquaintance of Gao Song, but he now has another higher position and as I coming to the end of a historical column under my name I feel relieved of a heavy burden.

While I was still contributing to the FT Chinese Web, a publisher expressed interest in a issuing a collection of the articles under the title, *Rereading Modern History*. Unexpectedly this was followed by fourteen other invitations from public and private organisations. This was worrying and even frightening. I have always sincerely believed that an author should take full responsibility for his own opinions, and in the articles in the 'Rereading Modern History' column I attach great importance to history and evidence. Possibly because of this, the short pieces may have a 'pedantic' quality which may not be to the liking of the audience of the mass media. This is one of the reasons why I am not continuing to publish my reading notes on the web.

In writing this small book I have had the assistance of many readers and editors, including Zhang Xiaomin of Shanghai Literature and Arts Press, Zhang Anqing the editor responsible for this volume, and Jin Liangnian who selected the illustrations. I will never forget the trouble they went to in ensuring that this book was published.

I must also thank my wife, Wang Guifen, who input the text of the book onto the computer and without whom the book would have never existed.

Zhu Weizheng
4 July 2010, at night.

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